



Pittsfield (MA) Parks Department Scrapbooks

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Pittsfield Parks
Department
Scrapbook
2001

Winter Carnival Family Day is Sunday at Burbank Park

PITTSFIELD — The 56th annual Winter Carnival Family Day will be held Sunday from 11 to 4 at the Controy Pavilion at Burbank Park. The entrance is by way of Lakeway Drive from Valentine Road.

Winter Carnival queen contestants will be selling Winter Carnival buttons at a cost of two for \$1.

Family Day activities include sled, skating and snowshoe races; horseshoes-on-ice; kite flying; snow sculpting (provided there is enough snow); golf-on-ice competitions (clubs and balls will be provided); and tethered hot air balloon rides for the children. These rides are dependent on wind conditions.

"Doc" Morton and friends will provide magic demonstrations and face painting. Annual favorite Richie Powers will transform

large blocks of ice into ice sculptures.

Haywagon rides will be provided throughout the day to shuttle participants to and from the parking area to the activities. A new attraction this year is pony rides for the children. Free helium balloons and refreshments will also be available in the newly remodeled and gas-heated pavilion.

Registration for Family Day activities begins at 11. There is no entry fee. Ice fishing derby registration begins at 6:30 a.m. at the Controy Pavilion. The fishing derby ends at 2. Prizes will be awarded in many age categories. There is a charge for adults.

Family Day is organized by the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee, an all-volunteer group under the auspices of the Pittsfield Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation.

Openings still available for skate program

PITTSFIELD — There are still openings in the learn-to-skate program sponsored by the Pittsfield Parks Speed Skating Club, in conjunction with the Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation.

The program will run Tuesday through Friday, Dec. 26 to 29, from 11:45 to 12:45 at the Boys' and Girls' Club rink on Melville Street.

Registrations will be taken at the Parks and Recreation Department at 874 North St. from 9 to 4 through Dec. 21. Further information: 499-9343. 12/15/00

Plans unveiled for Home Snow Sculpture Contest

PITTSFIELD — The Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee has announced that the annual Home Snow Sculpture Contest will run from Jan. 6 to 20. It is open to all residents of Pittsfield and is free of charge.

Upon completion of a snow sculpture in their yard, participants are asked to phone the Parks Department at Springside House at 499-9343 between 9 and 3, Monday through Friday, to report the address location of the sculpture as well as their name(s) and phone number.

A member of the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee will then venture to the site to photograph the sculpture. The members of the committee will judge all photos.

There will be various prizes awarded to winners who will be announced at the 56th annual Family Day event to be held on Sunday, Jan. 21, at the Controy Pavilion on Onota Lake.

For more information: 499-9343. Information on all the Winter Carnival events is available by visiting the Winter Carnival website at <http://members.apl.com/PWinterCarnival>. 1/13/01

Signup extended for skating classes

PITTSFIELD — The Pittsfield Parks Speed Skating Club, in conjunction with the Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation, will conduct its annual Learn-to-Skate program beginning Wednesday, Dec. 26.

Registration has been extended, with signup Tuesday and Wednesday from 6 to 7 at the Pittsfield Boys' and Girls' Club skating rink. Cost is \$15; the program will run from 11:45 to 12:45 Wednesday through Friday, Dec. 26-28, and from 11 to noon Monday, Dec. 31, at the rink.

Skaters are required to wear helmets, gloves and knee and elbow pads. They should dress warmly but avoid loose, baggy clothes and long scarves. No double-runner skates are permitted. Skaters must be at least 5. 12/15/00

Handarek 3rd in Carnival ski division

Olivia Handarek of Pittsfield finished third in the girls' age 8-10 division at the 56th annual Pittsfield Winter Carnival alpine ski meet. Her time was 28.47 seconds.

Katherine Ferris of Lanesboro was first in the girls' 8-10 racer division in 28.03. Information in yesterday's Eagle was incorrect. 2/1/01

10 contestants to compete for Winter Carnival crown

PITTSFIELD — The 56th annual Winter Carnival Queen Contest kicked off yesterday afternoon with a luncheon at Itam Lodge. The contestants and their mothers were guests of the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee Inc.

Chairman David Melle said that following the dinner, the 10 queen contestants began selling their required minimum of 1,000 Winter Carnival buttons to be eligible to contend for the title of 2001 Winter Carnival Queen.

The selection will be made Friday, Feb. 16, at the Queen's Coronation Ball at Itam Lodge, by three judges who will make their choices based on poise, appearance, personality, expression and an understanding of Winter Carnival activities.

The sale of buttons is a separate contest and has no bearing on the judging of the queen or the lady-in-waiting. The contestant selling the most buttons will receive a special award. Funds raised by the button sales are used by the Winter Sports Committee to hold events throughout the winter, and for prizes and scholarships for winners of the contest.

Each contestant will receive a bag of gifts donated by local merchants, banks and the committee. This year, the queen will receive a scholarship to the school of her choice, as will the lady-in-waiting. The contestants also will choose a Miss Congeniality, who will receive an appropriate remembrance.

This year's contestants are: Amber Cianfrocco, 18, daughter of Robert and Janet Cianfrocco of Pittsfield. A senior at Pittsfield High School, she is active in tennis, the performing arts, technical theater, snowboarding, drawing, basic painting, sculpting, and writing poetry and short stories.

She is also involved in Students Against Driving Drunk, Proteus, orchestra, and the academic decathlon team, which is going to the state finals. She has volunteered at the Berkshire Museum and in feeding the homeless at First Baptist Church. She is employed by Brodie Mountain Ski Resort and also is a snowboard instructor at Bousquet Ski Area.

She plans to attend college and major in education of the performing arts and acting.

Amanda Daniels, 17, daughter of Debra Bruno of Pittsfield. A senior at Pittsfield High School, her interests include the French Club, running and track, and tutoring in geometry. She is a member of the Honor Society and Students Involved in Drug Education. She has coached cheerleading, volunteered at the Bay State Games, and been involved with the prom committee and cross country running. She is employed as a sales associate at the Gap.

She plans to attend Siena College in the fall as a business student.

Nadine Faisch, 17, daughter of Joel and Elisabeth Faisch of Pittsfield. A senior at Taconic High School, she is active in the

Berkshire Coalition to Prevent Teen Pregnancies Smart Leaders Program and in her church, Christian Assembly, as a Sunday school teacher, choir and youth group member, children's church helper and nursery worker. Also, she has been involved as a volunteer at the YMCA day-care center. She is a sales associate at the Gap Outlet in Lee.

She plans to attend college and major in clinical psychology.

Jamie Kilmer, 17, daughter of Bruce and Pat Kilmer of Pittsfield. A senior at Pittsfield High School, Kilmer is active in cheerleading and tutoring at Allendale School. She also has coached at CYC, taught catechism and been involved with St. Teresa's Church Youth Group.

She is a sales associate at the Gap and plans to attend college and major in law.

Megan Kirchner, 17, daughter of Michael and Judith Kirchner of Pittsfield. A senior and honors student at Taconic High School, she is involved with the Berkshire Humane Society, and the Travel and Spanish clubs.

She is secretary of Berkshire Youth United and teaches catechism at St. Mary's Church in Pittsfield. She is also a member of the prom committee and the student council. She is employed by Banister Shoe Studio in Lee as a retail sales associate.

She plans to attend the University of Massachusetts and Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine to become a veterinarian.

Kristine Martin, 17, daughter of Edward and Barbara Martin of Pittsfield. A senior at Taconic High School, she is captain of both the swim and track and field teams. She is president of Berkshire Youth United and active in the Special Olympics, student council, prom and yearbook committees, and the Spanish club.

She is employed by Nautica in Lee as a sales associate and plans to attend college and major in education.

April Pavin, 17, daughter of Robert Pavin and the late Carol Pavin, and stepdaughter of Diane Pavin of Pittsfield. She is a senior at Taconic High School and

involved in Berkshire Youth United, the student council, cross country running, Special Olympics and the prom committee. She also volunteers as a cheerleading coach at the CYC Service Society and is also involved with St. Mark's Parish.

She is a part-time teller at Berkshire Bank and plans to attend college and major in education.

Michele Robillard, 18, daughter of Cathy MacPhail and Steve Robillard of Pittsfield. A senior at Taconic High School, she is interested in swimming, running, camping and photography. She is involved in cross country running, the prom and yearbook committees, and activities at the CYC. She has been involved in the Pittsfield-Straubing Foreign Exchange Program and Students Against Driving Drunk. She is employed by Laurin Publishing and Modern Trends Hair Salon and plans to pursue a career in cosmetology and photography.

Ashley Rose, 17, daughter of Kristine Rose and Bruce DelGallo of Pittsfield. She is a senior at Taconic High School and interested in theater, reading, singing, traveling and writing. She is involved with youth group, student council, acting, the Taconic newspaper, the Pittsfield-Straubing Foreign Exchange Program and cross country skiing.

She teaches third-through fifth-grade Sunday school at First United Methodist Church and plans to attend college and major in political science.

Alicia White, 17, daughter of Marcella Cornwall and David White of Pittsfield. She is a senior at Taconic High School and plays varsity softball. She volunteers within the community and her school activities include the yearbook and prom committees, student council, Students Against Driving Drunk, the quiz team, New England Math League and Berkshire Youth United. She also volunteers for the Red Cross, the Berkshire Museum, Special Olympics and Feed the Homeless.

She plans to attend Sacred Heart University to major in pre-law and minor in psychology, and to pursue a career in law.



Ten contestants will vie for the title of Pittsfield Winter Carnival Queen. The contest kicked off yesterday with a luncheon. Hopeful contenders and past winners include Nadine Faisch, left, Megan Kirchner, 2000 Winter Carnival Queen Shana Metzger, 2000 Lady-in-Waiting Jessica Powers and Amber Cianfrocco. In the back row are Alicia White, left, Ashley Rose, Kristine Martin, Jamie Kilmer, April Pavin and Michele Robillard. Missing from the picture is Amanda Daniels.

Winter Carnival toboggan races Sunday

The Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee will hold its annual toboggan races on Sunday at Osceola Park.

Registration is from 11 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. with timed runs starting at noon. There are categories for two, three and four-person teams in all age groups.

If conditions are inadequate for the race, the event will be held at Clapp Park.

Information: Ron Przedpelski, 443-1617, or Pittsfield Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation, 499-9343. 1/24/01

Speed skating club to sponsor race

The Pittsfield Speed Skating Club in conjunction with the Pittsfield Parks and Recreation Department and Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee is sponsoring the Short Track Speed Skating championships tomorrow at the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Rink in North Adams.

The races begin at 1 p.m. and admission is free to the public. There will be 12 different age group divisions for this event, ranging in ages 8 and under to master (30 and over).

The event is part of the 56th Pittsfield Winter Carnival and will involve racers from the eastern part of the U.S.

Pittsfield Winter Carnival queen Ashley Rose will hand out trophies at the end of the event.

Information: Call 442-7541. 2/23/01

'Anything Goes' sled races set for Sunday

PITTSFIELD — The Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee announces its annual "Anything Goes" sled races will be held Sunday as part of the 56th annual Pittsfield Winter Carnival.

There will be several divisions. Age categories will range from 1 through 100. There will be trophy prizes for first through fifth place winners in each age category and for first through third place winners for the most uniquely designed sled.

Registration will begin at Clapp Park on West Housatonic Street at 9 a.m. (note earlier time than previously publicized). Entries for ages 18 and under will require a parent or guardian's signature.

Further information: Pittsfield Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation at 499-9343. 2/1/01

The Pittsfield Gazette January 4, 2001

Annual winter carnival begins with snow sculpture contest

continued from page 1

Family Day also provides an opportunity to mingle with Winter Carnival Queen contestants. The competition, which is open to girls 17-21 years old, culminates with a "Queen's Coronation Ball" on February 16 where the winning contestant and lady-in-waiting will be crowned. The Queen and runner-up receive scholarships. An award is also given for congeniality and a special prize is given to the contestant who sells the most Winter Carnival buttons.

All contestants sell carnival buttons, at two for \$1, to raise money to fund events. Each girl must sell at least 1,000 buttons to compete for the crown. Last year, Shana Metzger, now a student at the University of Arizona, won the crown.

"I became really good friends with

a lot of the girls," Metzger said. "I met a lot of new people."

As a contestant, Metzger found that many residents value the Winter Carnival tradition. "I was surprised at how much community support there was," she said. "It was a great experience."

On January 28, toboggan races will be held at either Osceola Park or Clapp Park, depending on which has better snow. A city-wide ski competition will be held on February 3, with racing for all age groups.

Drivers who enjoy a good slide can participate in automobile ice time trials at Onota Lake on February 10.

Clapp Park will host the "anything goes" sled races on February 18. As the name implies, contestants can slide down the hill in anything from an old bathtub to a grand piano.

The carnival's final event is short track speed skating on February 24 at the Vietnam Veterans rink in North Adams.

The purpose of all the events is to get people outdoors during the winter months. "If you look at other communities, there's nothing like this," said Melle, a committee volunteer for about 25 years. "It's a family event. Everybody can get involved."

Clark Nicholls, a volunteer for nearly 30 years, feels that the winter months offer many opportunities for fun recreation.

"This gets people out and having fun," he said. "The kids really enjoy winning trophies."

The Winter Sports Committee operates under the auspices of the parks department. For more information, call 443-9343.

SPONSORED BY:
The Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee, Inc. of the Department of Community Services, Parks & Recreation

THE 56TH ANNUAL PITTSEFIELD WINTER CARNIVAL

City of Pittsfield

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
Sunday January 21	FAMILY DAY: Meet the Queen Contestants Button Sales, Snowshoe Races Tethered Hot Air Balloon Rides Sled Races, Ice Skating Races Snow Sculpture Contest Horseshoes, Golf on Ice Ice Fishing Derby, Face Painting Haywagon, Pony Rides, Kite Flying Home Snow Sculpture Awards Free Balloons, Free Refreshments	Controy Pavilion Burbank Park Onota Lake (Please enter from Valentine Road)	11am-4pm
Sunday January 28	Toboggan Races All Ages	Osceola Park (alternate location Clapp Park)	11am-3:30pm
Saturday February 3	City Ski Meet Classes for All Kids	Bousquet Ski Area	9am
Sunday February 4	Cross Country Ski Races All Ages	Canterbury Farm Becket	9am
Saturday & Sunday February 10 & 11	Automobile Ice Time Trials Licensed Drivers (Entry fee charged)	Controy Pavilion Burbank Park Onota Lake	Register: 8-11am Timed Runs: 11am-4pm
Friday February 16	Queen's Coronation Ball	Itam Lodge (\$7 per person)	9pm
Sunday February 18	Anything Goes Sled Races All Ages	Clapp Park	11am
Saturday February 24	Pittsfield Short Track Speed Skating Championships	Vietnam Veterans Skating Rink North Adams	1pm Free Spectator Admissions

For further information, call The Pittsfield Department of Community Services, Parks & Recreation: 413-499-9343 or visit our website at <http://members.aol.com/pwintercarnival>



Hibbard students won second place in the Pittsfield Winter Carnival's snow sculpture competition for their elaborate bear. 2/1/01

Pittsfield alpine ski meet set for Saturday

The Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee's annual downhill ski race will take place Saturday at Bousquet Ski Area.

Open to area children ages 5 through 13, there will be categories for trained and non-trained racers. Trophies will be awarded.

The course will be an easy open slalom. Racers will be allowed two timed runs, the best time used for trophy position.

Registration at Bousquet Ski Area will begin at 9 a.m. in the lower lobby and continue until the races start at 10 a.m.

There is no entry fee. Racers will need to have a parent or guardian available for a consent signature.

There will be free hot chocolate and hot dog for each registrant.

For information call event chairman Dave Melle at 684-3050 or the Pittsfield parks department at 499-9343.

Cross country races planned for Sunday

The Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee has scheduled its annual Cross Country Ski Races for Sunday at the Canterbury Farm Ski Touring Center on Fred Snow Road, Becket. Registration starts at 9 a.m.; races begin at 10 a.m.

There is no entry fee. Younger racers will need to have a parent or guardian available for a consent signature.

The event will include a one kilometer children's fun race plus five kilometer freestyle races for ages 15 and under through 50 plus.

Trophy prizes will be awarded with special prizes for overall men's and women's class winners.

For information call event chairman Dennis Barry at 499-7697 or the parks department at 499-9343.

angle Lampas: 499-12/11/2001
the Web: www.BerkshireEagle.com

Learn-to-skate registration begins tonight

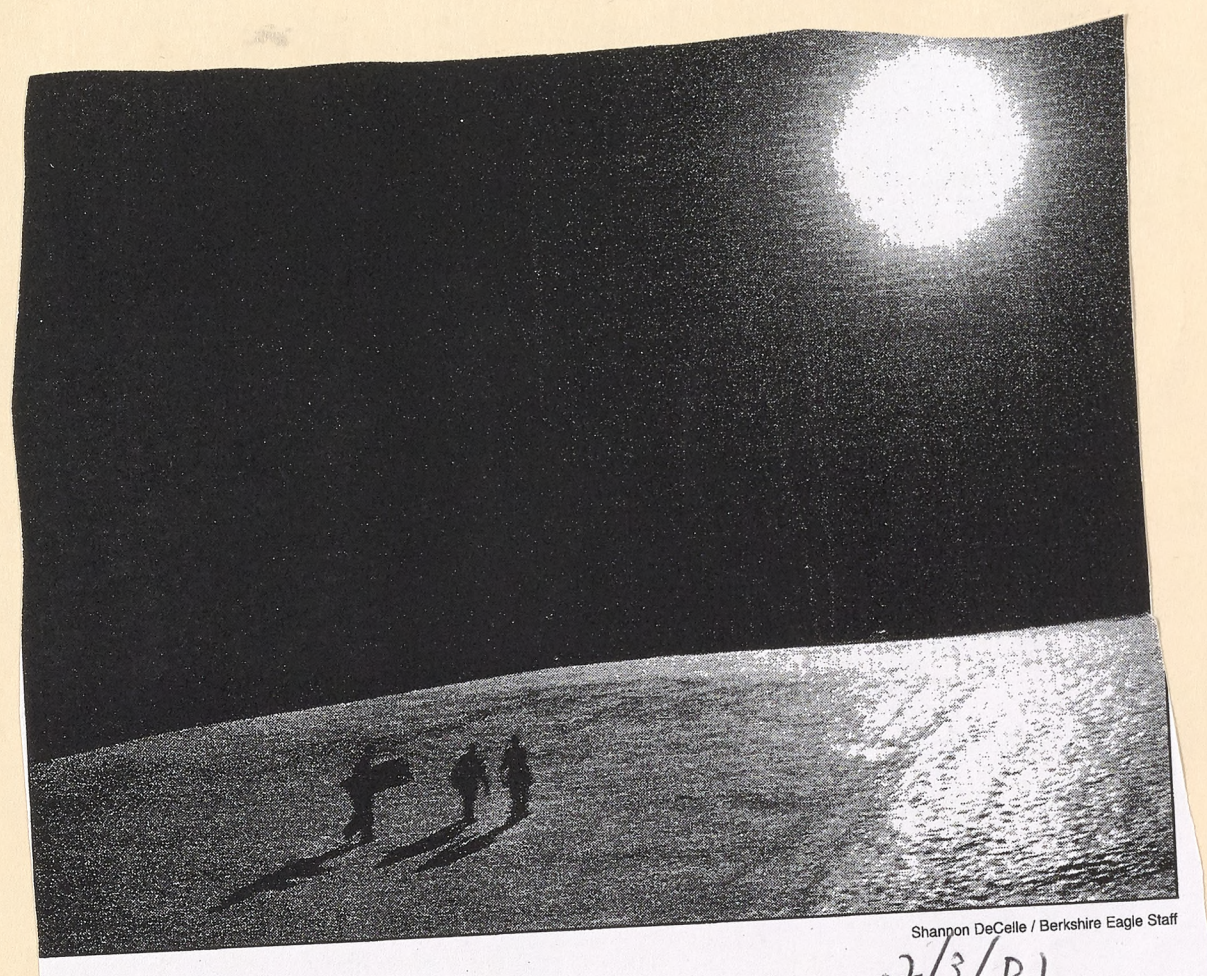
PITTSFIELD — The Pittsfield Parks Speed Skating Club, in conjunction with the Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation, will conduct its annual learn-to-skate program beginning Wednesday, Dec. 26.

The program will run from Wednesday through Friday, Dec. 26 through 28, from 11:45 to 12:45 and on Monday, Dec. 31, from 11 to noon at the Pittsfield Boys' and Girls' Club rink on Melville Street.

Skaters are required to wear helmets, gloves and knee and elbow pads. They should dress warmly but avoid loose, baggy clothes and long scarves. No double runner skates are permitted. Skaters must be at least 5 years old.

Registration will be held tonight and tomorrow evening from 6 to 7 at the skating rink. Cost of the program is \$15 on registration days and \$17 thereafter, if space is available. Eighty skaters will be accepted.

For late registrations: Department of Parks and Recreation at 499-9343.



Shannon DeCelle / Berkshire Eagle Staff 2/3/01

Night sliders

Sledders trudge back up a hill late Thursday afternoon at Clapp Park in Pittsfield. A park light beams over the icy slope, taking on the aspect of a brilliant moon.

Winter Carnival button chosen

PITTSFIELD — Ron Przedpelski, chairman of this year's Pittsfield Winter Carnival button design contest, has announced that Dan Prout and Sean Donnelly have won the 2002 contest. Both are students at Taconic High School.

The winning design was chosen from more than 132 entries submitted to the Winter Sports Committee by children from the city's elementary, middle and high schools.

The design depicts a snowman holding a U.S. flag while saluting. Category winners are as follows:

Kindergarten to Grade 2: Kelly Carroll Wittner, Grade 2, Egremont Elementary School.

Grades 3 to 5: Serina Stimpson, Grade 5, Stearns Elementary School.

Grades 6 to 8: James Allison, Grade 8, Herberg Middle School.

Grades 9 to 12: Brianna Tirrell, Grade 9, Taconic.

The contest grand prize is a \$50 Berkshire Mall gift certificate. Category winners will each receive a \$25 mall gift certificate.

The contest is sponsored by the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee Inc. of the Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation.

Buttons are sold by Winter Carnival queen contestants and proceeds help pay for carnival events. Buttons will go on sale Sunday, Jan. 13, 2002.

For information: Winter Carnival Web site at www.cwnicholls.com/Carnival or e-mail PWinterCarnival@aol.com. Carnival updates by e-mail can be requested.



Winter Carnival buttons will bear this design by Taconic High School students Dan Prout, a 12th-grader, and Sean Donnelly, a ninth-grader.



Photos by Joel Librizzi / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Family formations

Participants in the annual Toboggan Races at Osceola Park in Pittsfield show a variety of forms as they navigate the hill during time trials yesterday. The races, part of the 58th annual Pittsfield Winter Carnival, included categories for two, three and four persons on a sled. The next Winter Carnival event, the city Downhill Slalom Ski Meet for youngsters under age 13, will be next Saturday at Bousquet Ski Area.



Lewis fastest in Winter Carnival alpine

Brandon Lewis of Pittsfield had the fastest winning time in the 56th annual Pittsfield Winter Carnival's alpine ski race held this past weekend at the Bousquet Ski Area.

Lewis won the boys' age 8-10 division in 23.84 seconds. Tate Pasquini of Pittsfield won the boys' 7-under division and Adam Killen of Pittsfield won the boys' 11-13 division.

In the girls' competition, Sara Plager of Lenox won the 7-under division, Allison Nichols of Pittsfield took the 8-10 division while Caroline Caligari of Pittsfield won the 11-13 division.

Age 7-under — Boys: 1. Tate Pasquini, Pittsfield (27.50); 2. Nick Frost, Lenox (31.67); 3. Justin Evans, Richmond (31.92). Girls: 1. Sarah Plager, Lenox (30.87); 2. Sara Pero, Pittsfield (31.72); 3. Erin Barry, Pittsfield (32.36).

Age 8-10 — Boys: 1. Brandon Lewis, Pittsfield (23.84); 2. Mike Shepard, Pittsfield (24.90); 3. Chris Wilke, Pittsfield (26.76). Girls: 1. Allison Nichols, Pittsfield (26.52); 2. Gabby Marinaro, Pittsfield (27.12); 3. Katherine Ferris, Lanesboro (28.03).

Age 11-13 — Boys: 1. Adam Killen, Pittsfield (24.91); 2. Tim Vrabel, Pittsfield (29.22); 3. Corey Stall, Pittsfield (31.69). Girls: 1. Caroline Caligari, Pittsfield (23.99); 2. Caitlyn Tuggey, Pittsfield (28.64); 3. Annie Conzidine, Pittsfield (27.56).

Automobile ice time trials to be held

PITTSFIELD — The Winter Sports Committee Inc. of the Pittsfield Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation will hold the annual Automobile Ice Time Trials this weekend as part of the city's 56th Annual Winter Carnival. The event is held in cooperation with the Sports Car Club of America, Mohawk Hudson Region and is sanctioned as a Rallycross.

The competition is open to licensed drivers only and all types of automobiles. Registration starts at 8 a.m. Saturday and Sunday at the Controy Pavilion in Burbank Park, off Lakeway Drive, Onota Lake. Enter via Peck's Road.

Timed runs will begin at 11. Each day is a separate event. The event is a test of driving skills on ice, with the winding course approximately 1 to 1.5 miles long. There is no danger of collision as each car competes separately.

Trophies will be awarded for the top third of each class. The classes are as follows, with each class duplicated for studded tires:

Front engine with rear-wheel drive; front engine with front-wheel drive; rear engine with rear-wheel drive; 4-wheel drive, and other specialized vehicle classes.

Helmets (loaners are available) must be worn and seatbelts used. The entry fee is \$20. Dave Kosla of Pittsfield is the chairman. For information, contact Pittsfield Parks and Recreation.



Visitors to Sunday's Winter Carnival Family Day will have an opportunity to meet Queen contestants and purchase buttons to support carnival events. This year's contestants include: (back row) Alicia White, Ashley Rose, Kristine Martin, Jamie Kilmer, April Pavin, Michele Robillard, (front row) Nadine Faitsch, Megan Kirchner, Shana Metzger (2000 queen), Jessica Powers (2000 lady-in-waiting), Amber Cianfrocco, (not pictured, Amanda Daniels).

Carnival contestants selling buttons

Ten contestants are seeking the title of Winter Carnival Queen in the 56th annual competition sponsored by the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee, Inc.

The contestants must each sell at least 1,000 Winter Carnival buttons to be eligible to contend for the title of 2001 Winter Carnival Queen.

The selection will be made Friday, February 16, at the Queen's Coronation Ball, to be held at the ITAM Lodge.

The sale of buttons at two for \$1 is a separate contest and has no bearing on the judging of the queen or the lady-in-waiting. The contestant selling the most buttons will receive a special award. Monies raised by the sale of buttons are used by the Winter Sports Committee to fund events throughout the winter and for the prizes and scholarships awarded to the winners of the contest.

Each contestant will receive gifts donated by local merchants, banks and the Winter Sports Committee. This year the queen will receive a scholarship to the school of her choice, as will the lady-in-waiting. The contestants will also choose a Miss Congeniality, who will receive an appropriate remembrance.

This year's contestants are:

Amber Cianfrocco, 18, daughter of Robert and Janet Cianfrocco. A senior at Pittsfield High School, Cianfrocco is active in tennis, the performing arts, technical theater, snowboarding, drawing, basic painting, sculpting and writing poetry and stories.

Nadine Faitsch, 17, daughter of Joel and Elisabeth Faitsch. A senior at Taconic High School, Faitsch is active in the Berkshire Coalition to Prevent Teen Pregnancies Smart Leaders Program. She is also active in her church, Christian Assembly, as a Sunday school teacher, choir member, children's church helper, nursery worker, and youth group member. She has been involved as a volunteer at the YMCA daycare center. She is a sales associate at GAP Outlet in Lee. She plans to attend college and major in clinical psychology.

Jamie Kilmer, 17, daughter of Bruce and Pat Kilmer. A senior at PHS, Kilmer is active in cheerleading and tutoring at Allendale School. She also coached at CYC, taught CCD and was involved with St. Theresa's Church Youth Group. She is a sales associate at the GAP. She plans to attend college and major in law.

Megan Kirchner, 17, daughter of Michael and Judith Kirchner. Kirchner is a senior at Taconic. She is involved with the Berkshire Humane Society, the travel club, and the Spanish club. She is the secretary of Berkshire Youth United and teaches CCD at St. Mary's Church. She is also a member of the prom committee and the student council. She is employed by Banister Shoe Studio in Lee as a retail sales associate. She plans on attending U-Mass and then going on to Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine and becoming a veterinarian.

Kristine Martin, 17, daughter of Edward and

Barbara Martin. A senior at Taconic, Martin is captain of both swim and track and field teams. She is the president of Berkshire Youth United. She is active in the Special Olympics, the student council, prom committee, Spanish club and yearbook committee. She is currently employed by Nautica in Lee as a sales associate. She plans to attend college and major in education.

April Pavin, 17, daughter of Robert Pavin and the late Carol Pavin, and stepdaughter of Diane Pavin. She is a senior at Taconic and involved in Berkshire Youth United, the student council, cross country running, the Special Olympics, prom committee and volunteers as a cheerleading coach at the CYC Service Society. She is also involved with St. Mark's Parish. She is a part time teller at Berkshire Bank. She plans to attend college and major in education.

Michele Robillard, 18, daughter of Cathy MacPhail and Steve Robillard. She is a senior at Taconic and is interested in swimming, running, camping and photography. She is involved in cross country running, prom committee, yearbook committee, and activities at the CYC. She was also involved in the Pittsfield-Straubing Foreign Exchange Program and S.A.D.D. She is employed by Laurin Publishing and Modern Trends Hair Salon. She plans to pursue a career in cosmetology and photography.

Ashley Rose, 17, daughter of Kristine Rose and Bruce DelGallo. She is a senior at Taconic and interested in theater, reading, singing, traveling and writing. She is involved with Youth Group, student council, acting, the Taconic newspaper, the Pittsfield/Straubing German Exchange Program, and cross country skiing. She teaches Sunday school at the First United Methodist Church. She plans on attending college and majoring in political science.

Alicia White, 17, daughter of Marcella Cornwell and David White. She is a senior at Taconic and plays on the varsity softball team, and volunteers within the community. Her school activities include the yearbook committee, student council, S.A.D.D., Quiz Team, New England Math League, Berkshire Youth United and prom committee. Outside of school her activities include volunteering for the Red Cross, the Berkshire Museum and the Special Olympics and Feed the Homeless. She plans on attending Sacred Heart University to major in pre-law and minor in psychology. She plans to pursue a career in law as an attorney.

Amanda Daniels, 17, daughter of Debra Bruno. She is a senior at PHS. Her interests include French Club, running and track, tutoring in geometry, Honor Society member, Students Involved in Drug Education member. She has been involved with coaching cheerleading, volunteering at the Baystate Games, prom committee, and cross country running. She is employed as a sales associate at the GAP. She plans on attending Sienna College in the fall as a business student.

Smiles all around for winter queen

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Where others have cried or been overcome by emotion, Ashley Rose just smiled Friday night when selected queen of the 56th annual Pittsfield Winter Carnival at the Itam Lodge.

Rose could have cried, but if she had she would have broken a pact the 10 contestants made between themselves.

"A couple of us saw Miss Congeniality," Rose said referring to the movie in which actress Sandra Bullock plays an FBI agent who enters a beauty contest.

"They all cried," Rose said. "We promised each other we wouldn't. I was prepared not to cry. I smiled a lot."

"I feel like I want to hug my friends, though," she added.

The wet eyes were left to parents, relatives and friends, many of whom toted video cameras to film the 10 finalists dressed in elegant ball gowns as they slowly walked across the lodge's floor to the reviewing stand where the queen was announced.



Ashley Rose, dancing with Jay Brewster, was crowned queen of the 56th annual Winter Carnival Friday night.

QUEEN, continued on B4

Shannon DeCelle / Berkshire Eagle Staff

2/18/01

Queen from B1

Rose, 17, a senior at Taconic High School, was presented with her crown by last year's lady-in-waiting Jessica A. Powers, currently attending college in Pennsylvania. Last year's queen, Shana Metzger, is a freshman at the University of Arizona and was unable to attend.

Powers was succeeded as lady-in-waiting by Amber Cianfrocco, 18, a senior at Pittsfield High School.

"I don't know if [the thrill] has hit me yet," said Cianfrocco, who is a member of Pittsfield High's academic decathlon team and also a snowboard instructor at Bousquet Ski Area.

Rose, who is involved with the youth group, student council, student newspaper, acting, German exchange program and cross country ski team at Taconic, said she was just as surprised as she was happy to win.

"I didn't enter to win," Rose said. "I did it to have fun. I had such a good time that this is just another thing piled on top of all

the fun I had.

"All of us girls got to be real good friends," Rose added. "Some of these girls I had known for years, but now we're really close."

This year's contestants appeared to have made more than just one pact between themselves. After Rose won, they all took turns tapping her crown with their fingers.

Miss Congeniality selected

Megan Kirchner, selected as Miss Congeniality by her peers, waved her trophy in the air, then smiled, turned to the other contestants and said, "Oh, my God," while waving a hand in front of her face.

Kirchner, 17, also a senior at Taconic, said later her gesture was also prearranged.

"I'm a funny person," Kirchner said. "My goal was to make everyone laugh."

Each contestant is required to sell at least 1,000 Winter Carnival buttons to be eligible for the contest. The 10 finalists sold 14,017 buttons. Alicia White, another 17-year-old senior at Taconic, was the top button seller with 3,599 sold.

Funds raised from the sale of the buttons help support Winter Carnival events conducted annually by the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee, of the city's Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation. The button sales raised \$7,008.80 this year.

Following dinner at the lodge Friday night, the 10 finalists spent two hours in front of three judges who choose the queen based on poise, personality, appearance, expression and knowledge of the Winter Carnival.

This year's three judges all work in the criminal justice system, a curious choice considering the 10 finalists' considerable achievements.

Rose was also awarded a \$500 scholarship for being selected queen, while Cianfrocco received a \$250 scholarship and White \$360. The amount of White's scholarship was determined by the number of buttons she sold.

White said her mother helped her sell the buttons, and that the two had the most success going to restaurants when football games were being shown on television.

2/18/01

In the wake of a frozen flood



Under warm, sunny skies, city residents enjoy skating on the First Street Common in Pittsfield yesterday. Members of the Pittsfield Fire Department flooded the area on Sunday.

Joel Librizzi / Berkshire Eagle Staff

2/18/01

Carnival queen contest now taking applications

PITTSFIELD — This year's Winter Carnival queen contest Chairwomen Tina Melle and Julie Salatino, have announced that applications are now being accepted for 2002 Pittsfield Winter Carnival queen.

The contest is part of the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee Inc.'s Winter Carnival. The committee is part of the city's Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation.

Applications are available at Pittsfield high schools and at Berkshire Community College. They are also available at Spring-side House, 874 North St., Monday through Friday, from 9 to 4.

The contest is open to single girls ages 17 through 21 who have never been married and have no children, and who live, attend school or work in Pittsfield, or who live in the adjoining towns of Dalton, Hancock, Lanesboro, Lenox or Richmond.

Each contestant must sell a minimum of 1,500 Winter Carnival buttons to be eligible for judging at the Queen's Coronation Ball on Saturday, Feb. 16, 2002, at Itam Lodge.

The sale of buttons is a separate contest and has no bearing on the queen and the lady-in-waiting, who will be chosen by a panel of judges based on their scores in different areas. Scholarships will be awarded to the queen and the lady-in-waiting, along with gifts. Miss Congeniality, to be selected

by the queen contestants the night of the ball, and the contestant selling the most buttons will each receive gifts.

There is a limit of 16 contestants and the deadline for filing applications is Wednesday, Dec. 12, at 4. Applicants are asked to hand-deliver their applications to Springside House on weekdays between 9 and 4.

For more information: Melle at 499-5612.

2/18/01

March 9, 2001



Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Snow going

Jack Buckley, 3, gets a tippy ride from his baby-sitter, Mary Bolduc, as they head to Clapp Park in Pittsfield recently for some sledding.

Button design contest opens for Winter Carnival

PITTSFIELD — The 2002 Pittsfield Winter Carnival has begun with its first event, the button design contest.

According to Dave Melle, chairman of the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee, the contest is open to all students in Pittsfield schools, both public and private. The button design must be related to winter.

Contest applications are available at area schools and at Springside House, 874 North St., from 9 to 4. The deadline is Friday, Oct. 12. Completed applications will be picked up from the schools or can be dropped off at Springside House.

Winners will be chosen in the following grade categories: Kindergarten through Grade 2; Grades 3 to 5; Grades 6 to 8, and Grades 9 to 12. Each winner will receive a \$25 Berkshire Mall certificate. A grand prize winner will be awarded a \$50 mall certificate and his/her design will be used for the 2002 carnival button.

Winners will be awarded at the Winter Sports Committee meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 7, at Springside House. The contest is sponsored by the committee, part of the Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation.

Buttons will be sold by carnival queen contestants, with proceeds going toward carnival events. They will go on sale Sunday, Jan. 13, through Feb. 10, 2002.

The button design contest chairman is Ron Przedpelski, 4443-1617, days or evenings. For more information: Springside House at 499-9343 or <http://members.aol.com/PWinterCarnival>.

4

The Pittsfield Gazette January 25, 2001

Family Frolic

Bright sun and abundant snow highlighted Sunday's Family Day at Burbank Park.



The Burdick family was one of several groups that accepted the challenge of transforming giant mounds of snow into a dragon. Laurie Burdick seemed to be saddled with much of the work.



Lakeside sleigh rides provided an overview of activities during the annual Winter Carnival Family Day held Sunday.

Hot dog and hot chocolate service helped take the sting out of the afternoon chill.

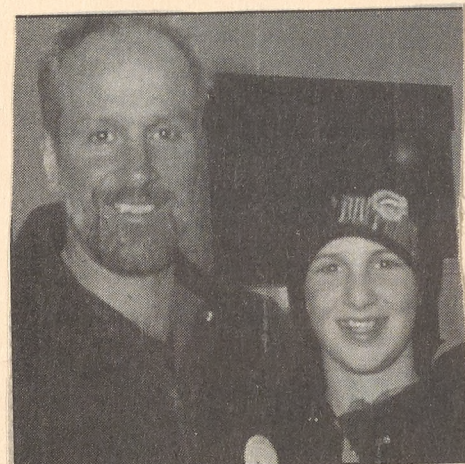


Intrepid youngsters enjoyed sled races. Other competitions ranged from ice fishing to horseshoes on ice.



Sled races at Clapp today canceled

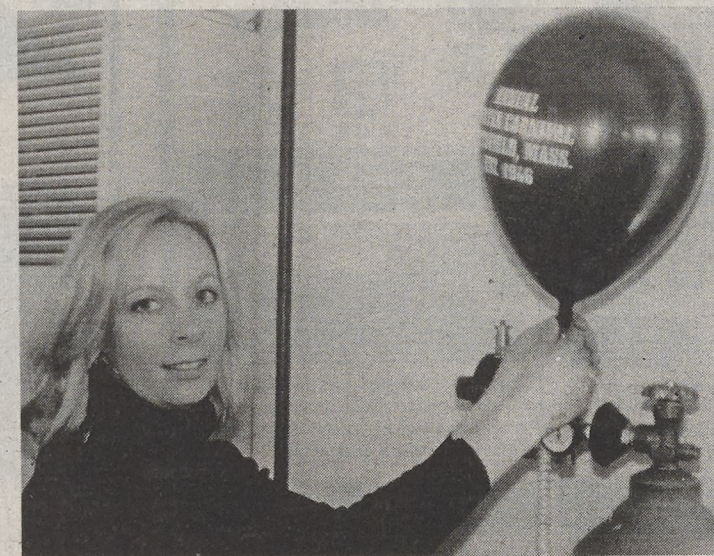
The Anything Goes Sled races scheduled for today at Clapp Park have been canceled due to the lack of snow and slippery conditions on the hill. The event will not be rescheduled. 2/18/01



Pittsfield Parks Director Robert Melle and his son, Matthew Melle. 2/18/01



Wendy Kowalczyk led a pony ride for five-year-old Brennan Bushey, accompanied by Mike Bushey.



Balloons buoyed the spirits of winter revelers. Tina Melle handled the helium.

Toboggan races slide onto Sunday schedule

The Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee's annual toboggan races will be held Sunday at Osceola Park on Gale Avenue.

If conditions are not adequate, the event will be held at Clapp Park. Registration from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. with timed runs starting at noon.

There are categories for two, three and four person toboggan teams in all ages. Entrants may participate on more than one team. Toboggans are available for loan, but participants may bring their own. Only wooden u-shaped toboggans are allowed.

In several divisions, trophies will be awarded after the timed runs. The Terry Donnelly Memorial Cup will be given in the 4-person category. If the same 4-person team wins two years in a row, they get to keep the trophy, now on display at the Pittsfield Police Station.

There is no charge for entrants or spectators. The chairman of the toboggan races is Ron Przedpelski. For information call the parks and recreation department at 499-9343.



Royal Dance

Taconic High School Senior Ashley Rose became the 2001 Winter Carnival Queen this past Friday. Hundreds of parents and guests attended the coronation ball at the Itam Lodge, a longtime Pittsfield tradition. Rose was one of ten young women who participated in this year's contest, part of the Pittsfield Winter Carnival. See page 3.

Winter Carnival Queen contest seeks contestants

PITTSFIELD — Applications are now being taken for the Winter Carnival Queen contest, according to David J. Melle, chairman of the Pittsfield Winter Carnival Committee Inc. of the Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation.

The contest is open to all single girls ages 17 through 21 who have never been married, have no children, are of good moral character and who live, attend school or work in Pittsfield, or who live in the adjoining towns of Dalton, Hancock, Lanesboro, Lenox, Richmond or Washington.

Each contestant must sell a minimum of 1,000 Winter Carnival buttons to be eligible for judging at the Queen's Coronation Ball, scheduled for Friday, Feb. 16, at the Itam Lodge.

The sale of the buttons is a separate contest and has no bearing on the judging of the queen and the lady-in-waiting, who will be chosen by a panel of judges based on their scores in different areas.

Scholarships will be awarded to the queen and the lady-in-waiting, along with special gifts. Miss Congeniality, to be selected by the queen contestants the night of the ball, and the contestant selling the most buttons will each receive special gifts.

Applications for those interested in competing are available at all Pittsfield high schools and at Berkshire Community College. They are also available at the Springside House, 874 North St., Monday through Friday, from 9 to 4.

There is a limit of 16 contestants and the deadline for filing applications is Friday, Dec. 29, at 3. Applicants are asked to hand-deliver their applications to the Springfield House on weekdays between 9 and 3.

Co-chairmen of this year's contest and ball are Tina Melle, Julie Salatino and Melissa Barnaby. Further information: Tina Melle at 499-5612.

Winter family day set for Sunday

Pittsfield's 56th annual free Winter Carnival Family Day will be held Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Controy Pavilion at Burbank Park.

Attendees should enter via Lakeway Drive from Valentine Road.

Activities will include sled, skating and snowshoe races, horseshoes on ice, kite flying, snow sculpting and golf-on-ice competitions.

"Doc" Morton and friends will provide magic demonstrations and face painting.

This year's Family Day will also feature tethered hot air balloon rides for the kids (50-100 foot vertical ascent). Rides are dependent on wind conditions.

Haywagon rides are provided throughout the day to shuttle participants to and from the parking area to the activities.

Pony rides are a new attraction this year.

Free helium balloons and refreshments will also be available in the newly remodeled and gas-heated pavilion.

Registration starts at 11 a.m. Entry for all activities is free.

An ice fishing derby is also a part of Family Day (modest charge for

adults). Registration is at 6:30 a.m. at the Controy Pavilion. Prizes will be awarded in many age categories. The fishing derby ends at 2 p.m.

Family Day is organized by the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee, an all-volunteer group, that works in conjunction with the municipal parks department.

PITTSFIELD: The Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation is seeking seasonal employees to operate weed-harvesting equipment on various lakes. Employment shall run from May 21 through Aug. 24, but some scheduling flexibility is allowed. Longer-term employment, but not full-time, is also possible. Applications are available at either the Parks Department at Springside Park on North Street, or the Personnel Office at City Hall.

Winter Carnival button contest winner is Taconic High senior

PITTSFIELD — Dan Malacarne, a Taconic High School senior, won the 2001 Winter Carnival button design contest, said Ron Przedpelski, chairman of the contest.

Malacarne's design was chosen from more than 280 entries submitted to the Winter Sports Committee by children from the city's elementary, middle and high schools.

The button depicts the Winter Carnival queen on a toboggan followed by a snowman on a second toboggan.

Category winners are as follows:

Kindergarten through second grade: Nicole Chaves, Egremont School.



The 2001 Pittsfield Winter Carnival button was designed by Dan Malacarne.

Third through fifth grade: Ricarda Huthinson, St. Mark's School.

Sixth through eighth grade: Anna Rennie, St. Mark's School.

Ninth through 12th grade: Elizabeth Rogers, Taconic High.

Malacarne received a \$100 gift certificate to the Berkshire Mall. The category winners each received \$50 gift certificates to the mall.

The button design contest was sponsored by the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee Inc. of the Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation.

Buttons will be sold by Winter Carnival Queen contestants and proceeds will help pay for carnival events. Buttons will go on sale Sunday, Jan. 14.

The carnival Web site is <http://members.aol.com/PWinterCarnival> and E-mail at PWinterCarnival@aol.com. Updates by e-mail may be requested.

WinterFest events set for Saturday

PITTSFIELD — WinterFest, a day of free activities and contests, will be held this Saturday from 11 to 3 at Springside House, Springside Park, 874 North St.

The event is sponsored by the Vincent J. Hebert Arboretum in cooperation with the City of Pittsfield Parks Commission, the Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation and Pittsfield Beautiful Inc.

Highlights will include a snowball contest, cardboard sled contest for children and adults, a snow creations contest, cookie decorating, face painting and art, scavenger hunt, snowshoeing (instruction and shoes available), cross-country skiing, animal tracks, tree identification and an open house at the greenhouse. Prizes will be awarded for the contests.

Further information: 499-9343 or 445-5540.

Organizers hope carnival soars

By Anthony Fyden

Bundle up Berkshire County, it's Winter Carnival time.

The 56th annual Pittsfield Winter Carnival kicks off this week, beginning nearly two months of mostly outdoor events & activities.

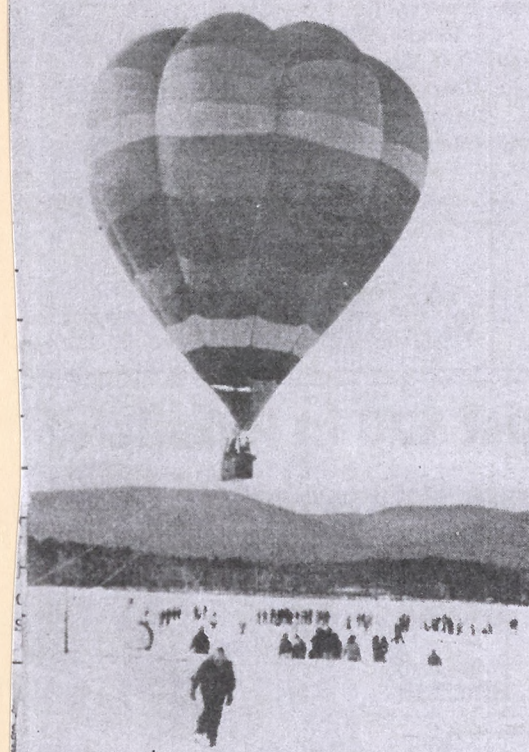
From January 6 through 20, residents can display their artistry in a snow sculpture contest. Just get out and start sculpting, and then call the city parks department at 499-9343. A representative of the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee — the all volunteer organization that organizes the carnival — will photograph the chilly masterpiece for later judging.

According to Winter Carnival chairman Dave Melle, the home snow sculpting contest is a longtime carnival tradition that faded in recent years because of lack of snow. Not a problem right now.

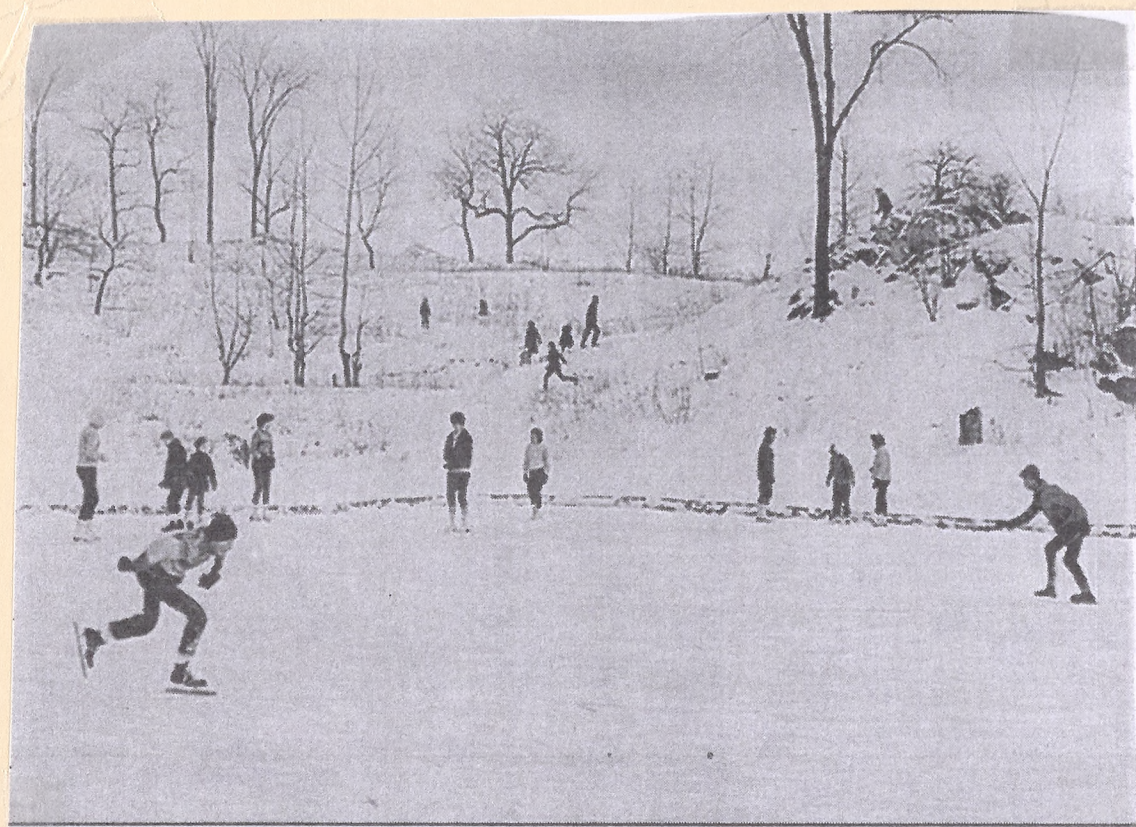
"All this snow is a great thing," Melle said. "Things are really looking good."

The premier Winter Carnival event, Family Day, will be held on January 21 at Burbank Park on the shores of frozen Onoto Lake. This hyperborean extravaganza features snowshoe races, tethered hot air balloon rides (weather permitting), sled races, skating races, snow sculpture contest, horseshoes on ice, an ice fishing derby, face painting, haywagon rides and kite flying. Refreshments will be available and revelers can warm up in the woodstove-heated Controy Pavilion. All events, except for the ice fishing derby, are free.

See CARNIVAL page 32



The season's early snow cover has raised hopes for a successful Winter Carnival. The program begins this week with a snow sculpture contest. Family Day will be January 21.



Skaters take to the ice at Pittsfield's Springside Park in December 1963.

The Berkshire Eagle, Thursday, February 1, 2001 — C3

Area Sports

Winter Carnival ski races this weekend

The 56th annual Pittsfield Winter Carnival will hold its alpine and cross country ski races this weekend.

The alpine race will take place on Saturday at the Bousquet Ski Area and is open to racers age 5-13. Pre-registration forms are available at Springside House, 874 North St., until Friday. Race-day registration is at 9 a.m. in the lower lobby and continues until races start at 10.

The cross country races will be held at Canterbury Farm Ski Touring Center, Fred Snow Road in Becket. Race-day registration begins at 9 a.m., with the races starting at 10.

There is no charge for either event. Information: alpine chairman Dave Melle, 684-3050; cross country chairman Dennis Barry, 499-7697; Pittsfield Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation, 499-9343.

O'Connell top finisher in XC ski race

Vinnie O'Connell of Plainfield was the fastest division victor in the 56th annual Pittsfield Winter Carnival's cross country ski tournament, held this weekend in Cummington.

O'Connell, racing in the men's 40-49 division, covered the five-kilometer course in 15 minutes, 21.92 seconds. Kathy Swanson of Plainfield was the fastest women's finisher, taking the 40-49 division in 20:22.51.

Run race — 1. Ian Casella, Washington (7:12.87); 2. Timothy Goggins, Pittsfield (8:08.62); 3. Ben Casella, Washington (13:51.36).

Age 20-29 — Male: 1. Aaron Bond, Washington (18:02.35). Female: 1. Michelle Modestow, Huntington (21:55.30).

Age 30-39 — Male: 1. Ian Modestow, Huntington (16:37.58); 2. Mike Tucker, Pittsfield (18:16.79); 3. Gary Moynihan, Pittsfield (19:16.74).

Age 40-49 — Male: 1. Vinnie O'Connell, Plainfield (15:21.92); 2. Kurt Kuehnel, Dalton (15:31.80); 3. Bruce Townend, Windsor (17:18.79). Female: 1. Kathy Swanson, Plainfield (20:22.51); 2. Barbara Merkessinis, Becket (22:55.78).

Age 50-59 — Male: 1. Ed Bond, Washington (21:17.81); 2. Chris Butler, Dalton (35:02.77).

Hundreds attend coronation ball

By Anthony Fyden

Taconic High School senior Ashley Rose wore the crown, but all ten Pittsfield Winter Carnival Queen contestants shared the glitter this past Friday during a Coronation Ball at the Itam Lodge.

A panel of three judges selected Rose, 17, as the 2001 Winter Carnival Queen and Pittsfield High School senior Amber Cianfrocco as lady-in-waiting. Megan Kirchner, a Taconic senior, was chosen by her peers as "Miss Congeniality."

The group's camaraderie was apparent. Following the coronation ceremony, the contestants immediately began celebrating together, posing for photographs, sharing hugs and dancing.

"We're all really good friends," Rose said. "We've had such a good time through all of this."

Several hundred family members and well-wishers attended the ball, snapping photographs throughout the formal event. A tuxedo-clad escort ushered each contestant to the stage.

Sparkling snowflakes were suspended from the ceiling of the banquet hall, providing a glittering backdrop as the young ladies were announced and slowly walked into the room.

Prior to the queen announcement, the room was hushed, with guests and contestants showing deference to a longtime Pittsfield tradition.

The queen contest highlights Pittsfield's Winter Carnival, a nearly two-month-long series of winter sports, family and social events. Prior

to voting, the panel of judges queried the contestants on their knowledge of the winter carnival along with their insights on teen issues and community service.

"A lot of people think this is a beauty pageant and it's not like that at all," Rose said. "You just have to be yourself."

She added that participating has "opened her eyes to what the Winter Carnival is about." Rose, who plans to major in political science at college, said she looks forward to sharing her experience with contestants next year.

In order to qualify, queen contestants must sell at least 1,000 carnival buttons, with the funds supporting events. The ten finalists together sold

more than 14,000 buttons during this year's contest. Alicia White, a Taconic senior, sold the most buttons, 3,599.

As Winter Carnival Queen, Rose received a \$500 scholarship; lady-in-waiting, Cianfrocco received a \$250 scholarship and White, as top button seller, received a \$360 scholarship, based on the number of buttons she sold. Other finalists were Nadine Faitsch, Kristine Martin, Jamie Kilmer, April Pavin, Michele Robillard and Amanda Daniels.

Tina Melle & Julie Salatino served as co-chairs of the queen contest. This year marked the 56th annual Pittsfield Winter Carnival. The event, which is organized by volunteers, is sponsored in conjunction with the city's parks department.

This year's queen contest finalists sold more than 14,000 buttons to fund winter carnival activities.



Winter Carnival sled race results

Results of Pittsfield Winter Carnival Family Day Sled Races.

Top 5 by division

Boys' under 5

1. Cameron Civello, Jonathan Bell, Brad Williams, Dominic Carnevale, Dominick Pompei.

Boys' 6-8

1. Eric Leitch, 2. Michael Pravia, 3. Jeff Warren, 4. Andrew Leitch, 5. Walker Phillips.

Boys' 10-11

1. Travis Killeen, 2. Jonathan Nixon, 3. Tim Goggins, 4. Justin Balsamo, 5. Shea Garner.

Boys' 12-14

1. Christopher Arena, 2. David Malow, 3. Matt Shaw, 4. Aaron Castanguay, 5. Jeff Nixon.

Girls' under 5

1. Christina Longstreet, 2. Megan McCauley, 3. Sarah Henault, 4. Maria Pompei, 5. Sarah Kucka.

Girls' 6-8

1. Lyndsay Bell, 2. Jenna Rose, Danielle Bradley, Cassie Vosburgh, Allyson Dickhaus.

Girls' 10-11

1. Cheyenne Starbird, 2. Casey Leab, 3. Amber Reese, 4. Brianna Flynn, 5. Jaclyn Candelet.

Girls' 12-14

1. Corey Baldwin, 2. Heather Walger.

Button winners announced

Taconic High School students Dan Prout and Sean Donnelly, have won the 2002 Winter Carnival button design contest. Their design was chosen from more than 132 entries. Their button depicts a snowman holding a US flag while saluting.

Other category winners include Kelly Carroll Wittner, Egremont School; Serina Stimpson, Stearns School; James Allison, Herberg Middle School; and Brianna Tirrell, Taconic High School.

The contest is sponsored by the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee Inc. of the Department of Community Services / Parks and Recreation. Buttons are sold by Winter Carnival Queen contestants to help pay for Carnival events. Buttons go on sale Sunday, January 13.

Carnival queen contestants sought

Applications are now being accepted for the 2002 Pittsfield Winter Carnival Queen's contest.

Applications are available at all Pittsfield high schools and at Berkshire Community College. They are also available at Springside House, 874 North Street.

The contest is open to all single girls ages 17 through 21 who have never been married and have no children, and who live, attend school or work in Pittsfield, or who live in the adjoining towns of Dalton, Hancock, Lanesboro, Lenox or Richmond.

Each contestant must sell a minimum of 1,500 Winter Carnival buttons to be eligible for judging at the Queen's Coronation Ball on Saturday, February 16 and the ITAM Lodge.

The sale of buttons is a separate contest and has no bearing on the judging of the queen and the lady-in-waiting, who will be chosen by a panel of judges based on their scores in different areas. Scholarships will be awarded to the queen and the lady-in-waiting, along with special gifts. Miss Congeniality, to be selected by the queen contestants the night of the ball, and the contestant selling the most buttons will each receive special gifts.

There is a limit of 16 contestants and the deadline for filing applications is Wednesday, December 12 at 4 p.m. Applicants are asked to hand-deliver their applications to Springside House on weekdays between 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For information call Tina Melle — who is co-chairing the program with Julie Salatino — at 499-5612.

Pittsfield Astros announce 2001 schedule

By Howard Herman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The Pittsfield Astros will play 25 of their 38 home games during June and July.

"I think its probably one of the better schedules we've been given by the schedule maker of the New York-Penn League," said Astros general manager Rick Murphy.

"To be honest, it looks very good."

The Astros will open the 2001 season on Tuesday, June 19, against the Vermont Expos. The club will open with a six-game homestand, four against the Expos and two against the Auburn Doubledays.

The six-game homestand is the longest the Astros will play at Wahconah Park. They'll have a second six-day stand July 26-31.

July is the busiest month at home for the Astros, as they'll have 15 home games.

The Astros will play on July 4 against the Brooklyn Cyclones, the New York Mets affiliate which ended a 12-year run with Pittsfield last season.

"July is our largest drawing month," said Murphy. In July, the Astros will play 10 of their 15 home games on either Wednesday, Thursday or Friday.

The Astros will again be at home on July 4, with the Brooklyn Cyclones the opponents. That's the first game of a four-game homestand against the new New York-Penn League affiliate of the New York Mets. The

Mets ended their 12-year affiliation with Pittsfield in the off season.

"It doesn't sound right saying that," said Murphy. "But it'll be an opportunity for Berkshire County Mets fans to come out and see our former affiliate."

Of the club's 38 home games, only 10 are on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday nights, traditionally the slowest nights of the season.

This year, the teams in the New York-Penn League will play a limited interdivisional schedule. For example, the Astros do not play Mahoning Valley, Batavia or Jamestown. That means Berkshire County baseball fans won't see Indians, Braves or Phillies farmhands.

"Some clubs didn't want interdivision play, but could live with limited interdivisional play," Murphy

ASTROS, continued on C3

Astros from C1

explained.

"[The league] tried to minimize travel," the Pittsfield GM continued. "We don't have to travel to Mahoning Valley [near Youngstown, Ohio] or Jamestown. Our longest bus trip is six hours to Williamsport."

The Astros will play four home games and four road games against each of their McNamara Division rivals. The Pittsfield club will also play four of the Stedler Division teams, Auburn, Oneonta, Williamsport and Utica. Utica and Oneonta will come to Pittsfield three times each and the Astros will go there four times. Williamsport and Auburn will travel to Wahconah Park four times and host the Astros three times each.

The league has scheduled only two, two-game homestands for the Astros. That's a situation Murphy said is something the major league farm directors didn't want to see a lot of.

"They want to cut down the time on the bus," he said. "It's part of [minor league] baseball, but it makes it taxing on a team from the development point of view."

"The optimal homestand is four games," Murphy added. "Six is OK and eight is tough from a marketing standpoint."

The 2001 schedule:

JUNE

19 — VERMONT; 20 — VERMONT; 21 — VERMONT; 22 — VERMONT; 23 — AUBURN; 24 — AUBURN; 25 — at Williamsport; 26 — at Williamsport; 27 — at

Williamsport; 28 — STATEN ISLAND; 29 — STATEN ISLAND; 30 — STATEN ISLAND.

JULY

1 — STATEN ISLAND; 2 — at Hudson Valley; 3 — at Hudson Valley; 4 — BROOKLYN; 5 — BROOKLYN; 6 — BROOKLYN; 7 — at Oneonta; 8 — at Oneonta; 9 — at Oneonta; 10 — Off; 11 — UTICA; 12 — UTICA; 13 — UTICA; 14 — at Hudson Valley; 15 — at Hudson Valley; 16 — at Lowell; 17 — at Lowell; 18 — NEW JERSEY; 19 — NEW JERSEY; 20 — at Utica; 21 — at Utica; 22 — at Utica; 23 — at Utica; 24 — at Vermont; 25 — at Vermont; 26 — LOWELL; 27 — LOWELL; 28 — LOWELL; 29 — LOWELL; 30 — ONEONTA; 31 — ONEONTA.

AUGUST

1 — ONEONTA; 2 — at Brooklyn; 3 — at Brooklyn; 4 — NEW JERSEY; 5 — NEW JERSEY; 6 — at New Jersey; 7 — at New Jersey; 8 — Off; 9 — HUDSON VALLEY; 10 — HUDSON VALLEY; 11 — at Staten Island; 12 — at Staten Island; 13 — AUBURN; 14 — AUBURN; 15 — at Staten Island; 16 — at Staten Island; 17 — at Lowell; 18 — at Lowell; 19 — at Oneonta; 20 — at Oneonta; 21 — WILLIAMSPORT; 22 — WILLIAMSPORT; 23 — WILLIAMSPORT; 24 — WILLIAMSPORT; 25 — at New Jersey; 26 — at New Jersey; 27 — at Brooklyn; 28 — at Brooklyn; 29 — Off; 30 — at Vermont; 31 — at Vermont.

SEPTEMBER

1 — HUDSON VALLEY; 2 — HUDSON VALLEY; 3 — at Auburn; 4 — at Auburn; 5 — at Auburn.

Pittsfield Astros announce 2001 schedule for Wahconah Park

The Pittsfield Astros have announced their 2001 home schedule for Wahconah Park.

National Pastime, the owners of the franchise, previously fielded a team affiliated with the New York Mets. The squad continues in the New York-Penn League.

Following the 2001 season, the team will move to a new stadium in Troy.

The home schedule in Pittsfield is highlighted by a fireworks display following the July 4 game.

The Mets affiliate in the league this year will be the new Brooklyn Cyclones. The Cyclones are in the Astros' division, so local fans will still get a chance to see the former PittMets.

For the complete schedule, visit www.pittsfieldastros.com or call 499-6387.

June 19	Vermont Expos
June 20	Vermont Expos
June 21	Vermont Expos
June 22	Vermont Expos
June 23	Auburn Blue Jays
June 24	Auburn Blue Jays
June 28	Staten Island Yankees
June 29	Staten Island Yankees
June 30	Staten Island Yankees
July 1	Staten Island Yankees
July 4	Brooklyn Cyclones (Mets)
July 5	Brooklyn Cyclones (Mets)
July 6	Brooklyn Cyclones (Mets)
July 7	Brooklyn Cyclones (Mets)
July 11	Utica Blue Sox (Marlins)
July 12	Utica Blue Sox (Marlins)
July 13	Utica Blue Sox (Marlins)
July 18	New Jersey Cardinals
July 19	New Jersey Cardinals
July 26	Lowell Spinners (Red Sox)
July 27	Lowell Spinners (Red Sox)

July 28	Lowell Spinners (Red Sox)
July 29	Lowell Spinners (Red Sox)
July 30	Oneonta Tigers
July 31	Oneonta Tigers

August 1	Oneonta Tigers
August 4	New Jersey Cardinals
August 5	New Jersey Cardinals
August 9	Hudson Valley Renegades
Aug. 10	Hudson Valley Renegades
Aug. 13	Auburn Blue Jays
Aug. 14	Auburn Blue Jays
Aug. 21	Williamsport Crosscutters
Aug. 22	Williamsport Crosscutters
Aug. 23	Williamsport Crosscutters
Aug. 24	Williamsport Crosscutters

Sept. 1	Hudson Valley Renegades
Sept. 2	Hudson Valley Renegades

GAME TIMES Monday - Saturday 7:00 PM
Sunday 6:00 PM July 4th 6:30 PM
September 1, 2 6:00 PM

Myron Ritrosky's 29 points led the Yellow team to a 63-51 win over the Red team in the Pittsfield Parks and Recreation's co-ed basketball league action. Mark Carey led the Red with 20 points.

Compiled by Eagle librarian Grace McMahon.

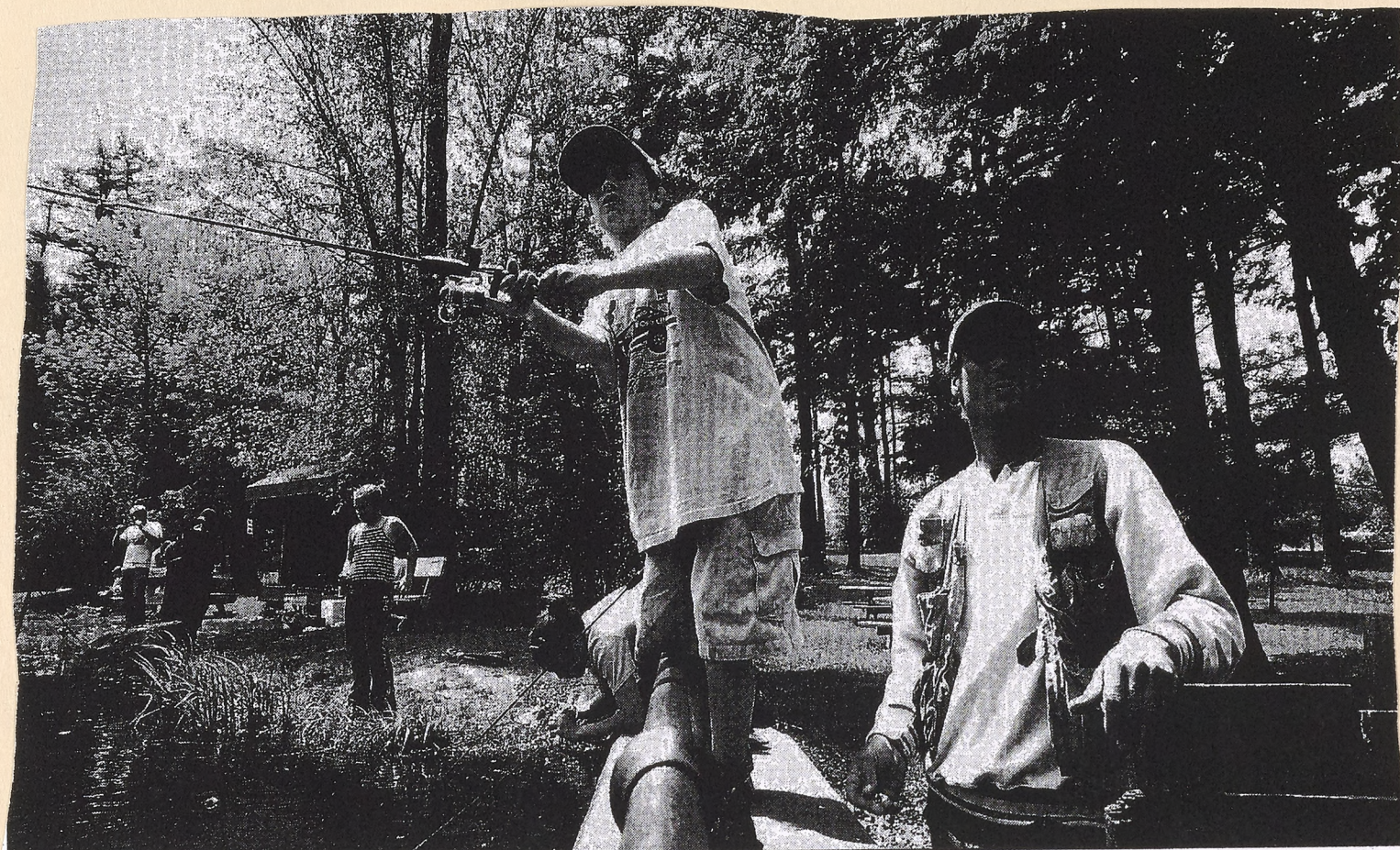
Monday, June 18, 2001 — B5



Joel Librizzi / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Cool haven

A couple find a shady spot Wednesday at Burbank Park in Pittsfield, by the shore of Onota Lake, to while away a summer day during last week's high temperatures.



Hook 'em up

Joshua Werth, 8, and his father Larry, of Lanesboro, fish at the Wild Acres sanctuary in Pittsfield last weekend during the two-day Children's Fishing Derby.

Shannon DeCelle / Berkshire Eagle Staff

5/23/01

Wahconah Park pact to be signed at noon Monday

PITTSFIELD — Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. and Jonathan Fleisig, owner of the Flyball Inc. of the Northern League, will officially sign a two-year license agreement for the use of Wahconah Park at noon on Monday. The event will be held at the Crowne Plaza hotel on the top floor.

Michael Kardamis, Flyball Inc. president/general manager, and members of the Pittsfield Parks Commission will also be in attendance.

The public is invited to attend.

12/6/01

Program results in planting of 54 trees

The city is planting 54 trees in Pittsfield under the "Replanting of Our Tradition." The initiative celebrates the county's 110th anniversary as a city.

Each tree will have a plaque (3 1/2 x 3 1/2") on a 4" x 4" post with an inscription reading "City of Pittsfield's 110th Anniversary 1891-2001." Many trees will also have an additional inscription requested by individual residents who wanted to dedicate a tree. Of the 54 trees, 26 are being planted at residences throughout the city. The remaining trees are being planted at Pitt, Bak, Crow, and Kirvin Playgrounds; Conte and Morningside Community Schools; and the Gerald S. Doyle Sr. Softball Complex. The school and park sites were selected in part because of space availability or to meet federal funding requirements to benefit lower income persons.

The trees are being planted by North Branch Landscape Co. of Stamford, Vt. who submitted the lowest quote. The total project cost is \$25,500 with funding provided by the federal Community Development Block Grant Program, Pittsfield Generating Company, the state's MASS Releaf Program, and private contributions.

6/14/01

Carnival may return to Common

The pending arrival of a Home Depot store at the Berkshire Crossing plaza has claimed an unlikely victim: the annual carnival that benefits the Pittsfield Babe Ruth baseball league.

For the past several years, the carnival—operated by Pittsfield-based Gillette Shows—has taken place on the parking lot at the plaza.

With this week's announcement that Home Depot will be erecting a building at the site—plus a management change at the adjacent Wal-Mart store, which has officially hosted the carnival—the Babe Ruth League needs a new home.

"It's all up in the air," said Babe Ruth league volunteer Jim Hassett.

The group still hopes that arrange-

ments can be worked out at the plaza.

"The Wal-Mart management is turning over, we have the other announcement, and it's hard to get a firm sense," he said.

Hassett on Monday petitioned the parks commission for permission to use the First Street Common from May 23-29 to host the carnival.

"We would like it as our fallback, to be honest," he said.

Gillette Shows generously supports the hometown Babe Ruth program, he said, but needs to set its touring schedule.

Hassett said that the Common—where the carnival was based seven years ago—is an acceptable alternative, though not ideal.

"We've had a mixture of success

there," he said.

Hassett added that Gillette Shows is willing to hire extra security and implement any contingencies to mitigate the impact of the carnival.

"They leave the grounds as good or better," he said.

Parks commission chairman Bob Smith said he would support the request, but asked what other options are being considered.

Hassett said the Wal-Mart plaza is still possible and inquiries have been made about the former Bradlees plaza.

He's also inquired about the Center and West street site where the proposed stadium might be located.

Commission member Cliff Nilan said that Gillette Shows is a corporate citizen and that the Babe Ruth League depends on the carnival revenues.

The board voted 4-0 in favor of the request. Hassett said he will update the board on efforts to find another site.

3/22/01

Springside Park cleanup sessions set

PITTSFIELD — Members of the Hebert Arboretum, the Red Cross Youth Services Group, the Junior League of Berkshire County and the Friends of Springside will celebrate Earth Day 2001 with a cleanup and beautification of Springside Park on Saturday. Two sessions will take place, at 9 and again at 1.

Volunteers are asked to meet at the parking lot near the children's playground at the site of the former children's zoo off upper North Street. The rain date is Sunday at the same times.

The public is invited. Participants are encouraged to wear thick-soled shoes or terrain-friendly footwear. Bags and gloves will be provided by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Further information: Judy Gitelson at 445-5540, or Royal Hartigan at (508) 999-8572, or e-mail at rhartigan@umassd.edu.

4/18/01

Springside summer concerts will return

The Eagles Band will again present three free outdoor concerts at Springside Park this summer.

The parks commission on Monday unanimously approved the dates for the traditional series.

Eagles Band spokesperson Diane Nichols said that twilight performances will be offered on June 26, July 17 and August 7.

3/22/01

B4 — The Berkshire Eagle, Wednesday, March 14, 2001



Master sander

Tom Shogry of the Pittsfield Parks Department carries a shovel under one arm while laying down sand on the sidewalk at the corner of North Street and Maplewood Avenue yesterday.

Joel Librizzi / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Public meeting set Wednesday on baseball plans

PITTSFIELD — A South County partnership that includes former New York Yankee Jim Bouton has scheduled a public meeting for 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 22, in the City Council chamber to solicit public opinion concerning the future of Wahconah Park.

Representatives of the partnership's "competition" — Jonathan Fleisig, who owns a Northern League franchise, and the New England Collegiate Baseball League — also have been invited to the meeting.

The three entities have presented their plans for baseball at Wahconah Park to the city's Parks Commission, which is expected to announce a decision Aug. 28.

3/20/01



Kelly Fyfe and Harvey Sides hunt for debris among the leaves.



Front from left, Edward, Martha and Matthew Horton and behind banner from left, Wayne Boynton, Mary Horton, Kevin Phelps, James and Christine McGrath, Victor Capelli, Kelly Fyfe, William Carrigan, John Serridge, Donald Flye, Judy Gitelson and Harvey Sides.

Spring cleanup

In honor of Earth Day, members of the Friends of Springside, Hebert Arboretum, Red Cross Youth Group and the Junior League participated April 21 in a cleanup and beautification of Springside Park. The project is part of an ongoing commitment to preserve the 237-acre park as a developed natural landscape for the enjoyment of Berkshire County residents.



Bill Carrigan, left, and Wayne Boynton search for trash.



Ashley Ethier takes a breather from cleanup near upper North Street.



Victor Capelli guards a debris pile near the children's playground.



John Serridge discovers an engine block in the meadows.

4/29/01.

Wednesday, April 25, 2001

Parks Commission delays decision on new swing set at Clapp Park

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Over the objections of a city councilor, the Parks Commission has delayed a decision on a request to spend some \$2,000 on a new swing set at Clapp Park.

City Councilor Richard J. Scapin of Ward 5 urged the commission to approve the purchase, funds for which would come from a capital account containing \$5,129 that dates to 1997.

"This has nothing to do with the total budget," Scapin told the commission on Monday. "This money is earmarked for Clapp Park."

Park Commission member Clifford J. Nilan said that Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. has asked the commission to review its budget

with him, and "we'll honor that request."

Earlier, Scapin had asserted that "vindictive politics" is being played with the issue.

"If this is tabled, I know what's going to happen. ... It'll be the end of summer before anything is done. ... This is a vindictive move toward a city councilor," he said.

Prayer site selected

In other business, the commission told Thomas Ross of Lenox that the Common Park on First Street could be made available for the National Day of Prayer on Thursday, May 3.

Ross said that local observances of the occasion have traditionally been held in front of the Silvio O. Conte Courthouse on Park Square. Officials of Berkshire

County, which owned the courthouse until July 1, 2000, when ownership passed to the state, had granted permission for the hour-long gathering. This year, however, state officials informed Ross and his committee that state law prohibits such observances near courthouses and declined to give permission.

The committee found itself in a dilemma, said Ross, because the date, time and place of the observance had already been publicly announced.

Ross initially requested that the gathering be permitted in Park Square, but the commission proposed the Common Park.

Nilan noted that Park Square has recently undergone renovations and "we're trying to discourage large crowds there."

Wahconah from A1

city-owned property; its renovation would be the city's responsibility. The last major work done there was a \$300,000 renovation completed before the 1997 baseball season. The project, designed by SK Design Group Inc. and built by Cardan Construction, involved installing a drainage system in the outfield, replacing the steel understructure and wooden seats of the lower grandstand, putting new lamps in stadium lights, refurbishing the public restrooms and building restroom access ramps for the disabled.

Professional standards

Nevertheless, the park does not comply with professional baseball standards set by the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues in St. Petersburg, Fla.

According to a September 1999 facility survey conducted by Gould Evans Associates of Lawrence, Kan., the home clubhouse is too small, the field dimensions are incorrect, the playing surface is defective, the foul poles are not sufficiently bright and the field lighting is out of compliance with standards for existing facilities.

Wahconah Park has failed to comply with standards in each of the last three periodic surveys, said Pittsfield Astros General Manager Richard Murphy, whose club will move to a new stadium in Troy, N.Y., in 2002.

The city, under Mayor Edward M. Reilly, undertook a \$30,000 study to identify a site for the construction of a new 4,500-seat stadium. The six-month "siting study" conducted by the firm Arrowstreet Inc. of Boston examined 14 sites, including Wahconah Park. In September 1997, it recommended building an estimated \$16.8 million facility at North Street and Kent Avenue near Berkshire Medical Center.

The site of the currently proposed new stadium was not among the 14 considered. Of the sites that were studied, five were rejected outright. Wahconah Park and four other sites were described as having major problems and were not recommended. The Kent Avenue proposal and sites at Fenn and First streets (the Common), next to Burbank Park, and on General Electric property in east Pittsfield were thought to have "good potential."

Voters were not persuaded. In a nonbinding referendum in November 1997, voters were asked if they approved of the construction of a new stadium. The tally was 3,256 in favor, 5,894 opposed, and 2,237 blanks.

Ballot questions

County Treasurer Peter G. Arlos initiated both the 1997 referendum and the November 2000 ballot question. Last year, he proposed that the now-defunct County Commission undertake another study of Wahconah Park.

Arlos this week eschewed involvement with either side of the current Civic Authority debate, saying he is "100 percent Wahconah Park."

Two options were developed for renovating the park in the 1997 siting study. Correcting the existing stadium to comply with professional baseball standards would cost \$9.6 million; providing grandstands and support facilities comparable to other stadiums would cost \$11.5 million.

The study's authors cited environmental, field orientation and cost problems in ruling out the park as a finalist.

"Wahconah Park has many problems, among which are some major deficiencies, e.g., the field has a dangerously faulty orientation, the support facilities do not meet standard requirements and critical needs, the capacity is too small and the parking areas flood," they stated.

The expense of correcting problems outside the stadium "make this option impractical [and] the end result would be less desirable and more costly to the city," according to the study.

Wahconah Park is located within the flood plain of the West Branch of the Housatonic River. The theoretical elevation of a worst-case flood occurring once every 100 years is 998 feet, several feet above the existing park and parking lot elevations, according to a 1982 Federal Emergency Management Agency map. Any regrading that displaces flood water in such an area, the study noted, must be balanced by removing grade elsewhere.

"That's really one of the major problems right there," said Caleb Mitchell, the city's conservation agent. "Where would you [find room] for compensatory storage? Whatever's lost you have to replace."

Commenting on flood plain construction in general, Timothy McKenna, an environmental analyst with the state Department of Environmental Protection in Springfield, offered a similar observation. "It can be difficult [to build] in flat locations," he said.

Ironically, a choke point in the West Branch located behind The Berkshire Eagle building and not

far from the proposed new stadium site at West and Center streets offers a partial solution to flooding of Wahconah Park. (Media News Group, parent company of The Eagle, has pledged \$2 million toward building the new stadium.)

A 1985 flood-control study conducted by C.T. Male Associates of Latham, N.Y., determined that lowering the Tel-Electric dam off Mill Street and spot-dredging the river would alleviate flooding upstream in the area of the park. The Army Corps of Engineers reached a similar conclusion years earlier.

"My contention is [that] if we were to remove that old collapsed dam, that would probably take care of half the problem," observed Ward 7 City Councilor Joseph O. Guzzo, who represents the Wahconah Park area and supports renovating the stadium.

Mitchell said Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. and Thomas F. Murphy, director of the city's Department of Community Development, recently asked him to report on environmental regulations affect-

ing Wahconah Park. In addition to the issue of compensatory flood plain storage, he said, wetlands bordering the West Branch call into play the state's Wetlands Protection Act. The more recent 1996 River Protection Act restricts new development within 200 feet of a riverbank.

Should the city decide to renovate the park, it must file a notice of intent with the local Conservation Commission and state DEP. The commission is required to hold a public hearing within 21 days of the filing and to issue either a denial or an order of conditions within 21 days of the conclusion of the hearing.

The DEP reviews approvals to ensure that minimum requirements are met and then issues a project file number. It also considers appeals of Conservation Commission decisions.

"Until you have a plan ... it's kind of hard to comment on what's workable or not, what's permissible or not permissible," Mitchell said.

That the city has no plan for renovating Wahconah Park, but

has focused instead on creating the Civic Authority, is a disservice to the community, Guzzo said. The city councilor, one of three councilors who have voted against creating the authority, believes that new materials and approaches can resolve the challenge of flood water dissipation at the park.

"There are other, environmentally friendly things you can do," he said. "I think there's a lot of potential there. I think [renovating Wahconah Park] is the right way to go."

Historic register

Guzzo is pursuing another side of the issue — having Wahconah Park listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Having the park so listed would not restrict a major renovation and would open the project to other sources of funding, he contends. According to the Massachusetts Historical Commission in Boston, inclusion on the register provides eligibility for matching state restoration grants in the case of projects owned by private

nonprofit organizations and municipalities.

Asked if a property could be substantially renovated and still be considered historic, Brian McNiff, a spokesman for the state commission, said: "It's not impossible to tear it down, but the commission's interest is in keeping structures around." The renovation would have to be "in roughly the same character" as the original facility, he said.

Robert M. Boland, chairman of the Pittsfield Historical Commission, said the process begins with a petition to the state. The local commission is required to provide a letter of support or an explanation of why the property is worthy of nomination to the register. If the state Historical Commission approves, the property is referred to the National Park Service in Washington, D.C., for inclusion on the national register, a process that takes about nine months.

"I've talked to Boston about Wahconah Park and they said they look forward to being able to review the property," Boland said.

Park board votes 2-1 to decline GEAA land

By D.R. Bahlman

Berkshire Eagle Staff

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Park Commission member Clifford J. Nilan, who cast the lone vote against making the recommendation, said he did so because he believes that land for recreational use is in short supply in Pittsfield and that the city should take every opportunity to increase its holdings of such land.

"We're in dire need of softball and soccer fields. ... Even if we can't develop it right now, in 10 years we might be able to," Nilan said.

Lack of funds

Park Commissioners James B. Conant and Sue P. Colker voted to recommend against exercising the option.

"It would be great for parkland, but we have no money to develop it [for recreational use]," said Conant. "We can't take care of what we have now. I can't see the logic of purchasing land that would just sit there for years."

Park Commission Chairman Robert J. Smith was not present last night; com-

4/5/01 PARK, continued on B4

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Based on available information, the answer to the first part of the question is "maybe." The city's last analysis, now more than 3 years old, pegged the cost of rebuilding the 82-year-old baseball stadium at \$11.5 million. But the consulting firm that conducted the study deemed the park "problematic" and omitted it from a list of recommended stadium sites.

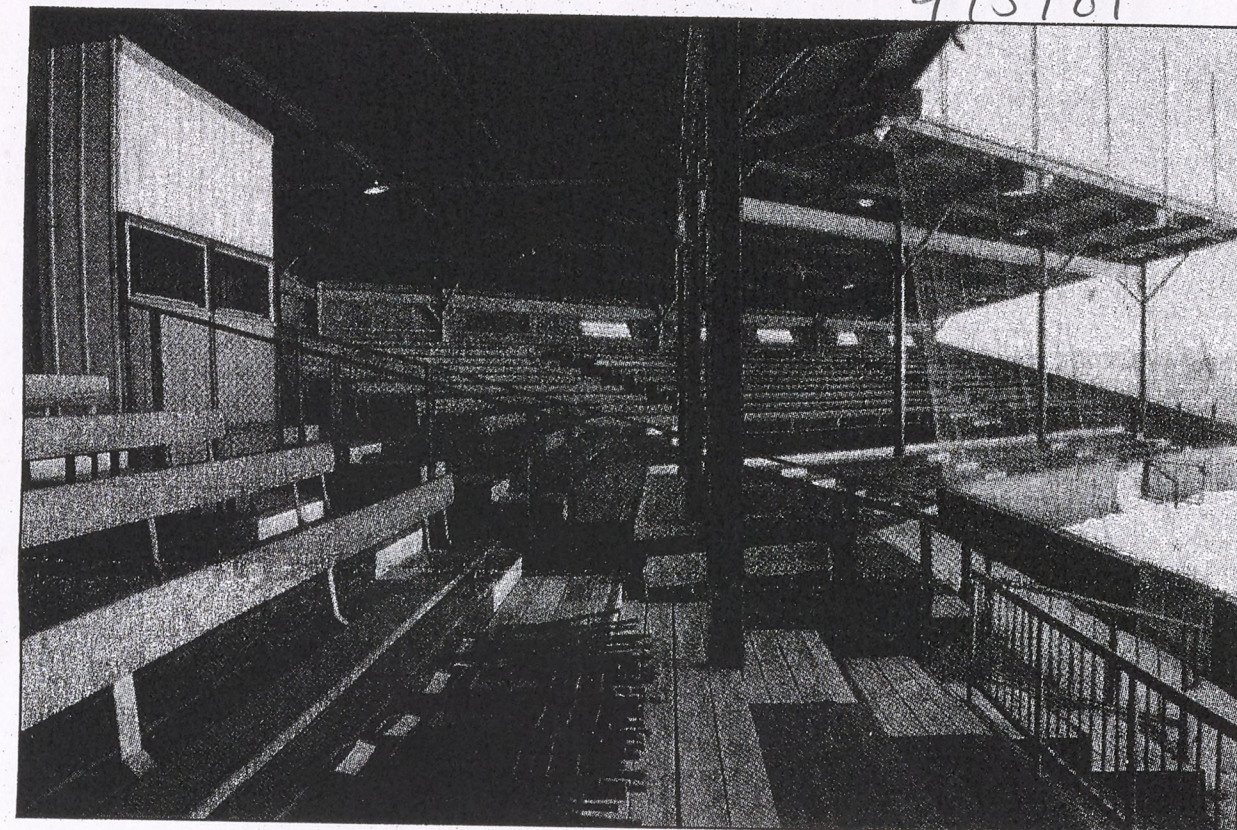
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In lieu of a comprehensive assessment, the park's challenges appear to be great, but not necessarily insurmountable.

Sentiment for preservation

There is a sentiment in the city to preserve Wahconah Park, which will host a minor league affiliate of the Houston Astros this summer for perhaps its last season of professional baseball.

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WAHCONAH, continued on A5

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Park from B1

mission member Anthony G. Massimiano Jr., who is a lawyer, abstained from the vote and left the room during the discussion because he once represented a party to the proposed transaction.

The land is owned by the General Electric Athletic Association, which proposes to sell it to CMS Homes Inc. for \$225,000. However, because the land has been classified as recreational and qualifies for taxation at a reduced rate, the city has a right of first refusal.

Tax revenue

GEAA treasurer John B. Reddington last night urged the commission to recommend that the city release its option in time for the summer construction season. The sale would generate some \$30,000 in immediate "roll-over" tax revenue to the cash-strapped city in addition to long-term income from the planned \$2.5 million housing development, Reddington said.

For its part, GEAA would be able to move forward on improving its facilities, increasing membership in its golf club and eventually expanding the nine-hole course to 18 holes. That would mean additional tax revenue for Pittsfield, said Reddington.

Michael Giovine, president of Builders Network Construction Co. and principal of CMS Homes, has said that he plans to develop the hilltop parcel for 10 houses averaging \$240,000 or more each and having lots of more than a half acre. 4/24/01

Wahconah from A1

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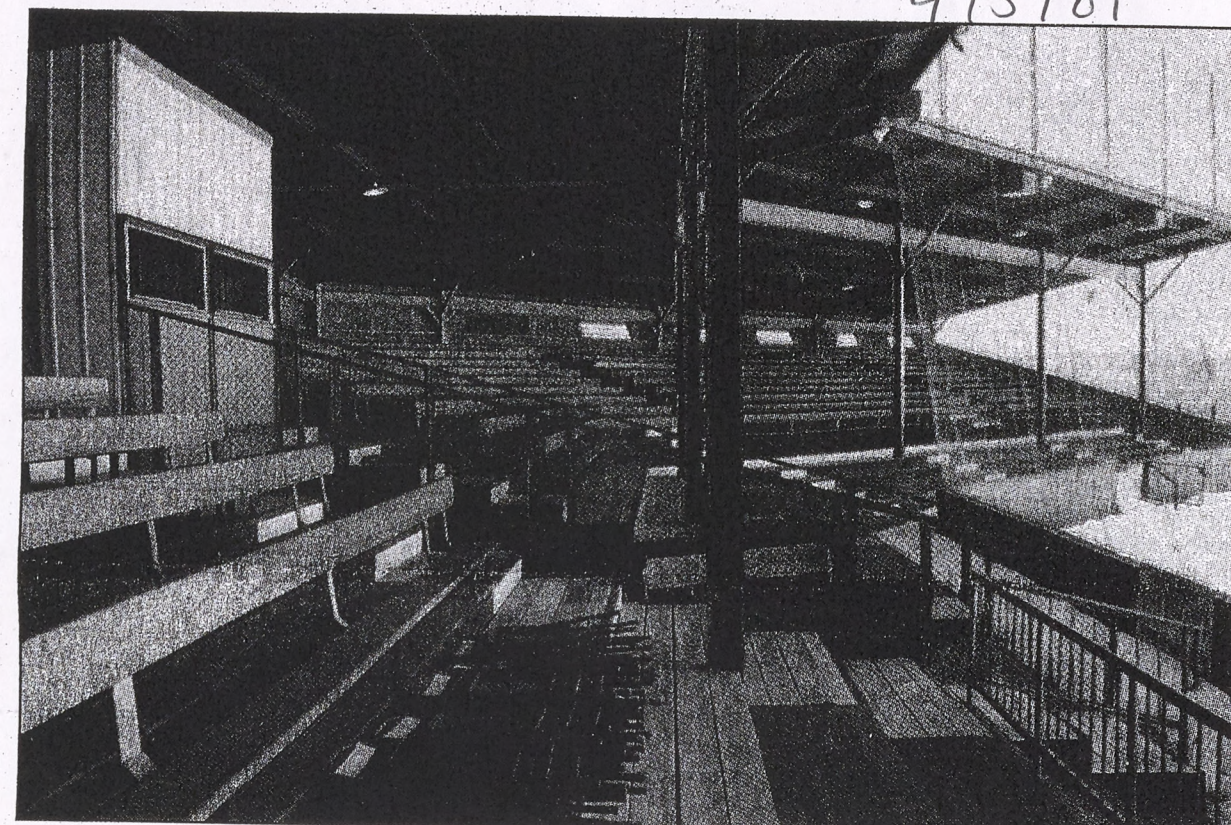
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Park from B1

mission member Anthony G. Massimiano Jr., who is a lawyer, abstained from the vote and left the room during the discussion because he once represented a party to the proposed transaction.

The land is owned by the General Electric Athletic Association, which proposes to sell it to CMS Homes Inc. for \$225,000. However, because the land has been classified as recreational and qualifies for taxation at a reduced rate, the city has a right of first refusal.

Tax revenue

GEAA treasurer John B. Reddington last night urged the commission to recommend that the city release its option in time for the summer construction season. The sale would generate some \$30,000 in immediate "roll-over" tax revenue to the cash-strapped city in addition to long-term income from the planned \$2.5 million housing development, Reddington said.

For its part, GEAA would be able to move forward on improving its facilities, increasing membership in its golf club and eventually expanding the nine-hole course to 18 holes. That would mean additional tax revenue for Pittsfield, said Reddington.

Michael Giovine, president of Builders Network Construction Co. and principal of CMS Homes, has said that he plans to develop the hilltop parcel for 10 houses averaging \$240,000 or more each and having lots of more than a half acre.

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Shannon DeCelle / Berkshire Eagle Staff
Jaime Latura took it upon himself to mow the ballfield at Osceola Park in Pittsfield.

Grass-roots activism: Neighbor mows ballfield

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Fed up with watching youngsters trying to play baseball in almost knee-high grass at Osceola Park, Jaime Latura of West Housatonic Street took the mower into his own hands yesterday.

Using his own 3 1/2-horsepower, gas-powered Briggs & Stratton, Latura went to Osceola Park and mowed down all the grass around the baseball field.

"I started early this morning and did it all with my son," said Latura, 39, who lives at the corner of West Housatonic and Osceola streets.

Latura actually started mowing Wednesday evening but had to stop when it became too dark to see. The grass was so high yesterday that Latura and his son, Matthew Guillou, 13, didn't finish the job until midafternoon.

"I had to cut it twice," Latura said.

Latura, an unemployed auto mechanic who works with his son as a deliveryman for The Eagle, claimed the Park Department had not cut the grass in Osceola Park since last year.

"I'm ticked off," Latura said. "Clapp Park is done, Benedict Park is done. Why can't they do this field?"

There are two main reasons why the Osceola Park field wasn't mowed yet, Robert S. Mellace, director of community services, said last night.

"The weather, with all the rain of the last few weeks, coupled with the fact that one of our two tractors lost its transmission and we just got it back, put the mowing schedule behind," said Mellace. The tractor needed a \$2,800

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Baseball rivals will sit out info meeting

By Bill Carey
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Only one of the three groups proposing new baseball clubs for Wahconah Park will be represented at a public meeting tonight — the group that arranged the meeting.

Jonathan Fleisig, owner of the dormant Massachusetts Mad Dogs franchise, and college-age baseball league proponent James E. Ryan said yesterday they do not plan to attend the meeting organized by the partnership of Jim Bouton, Eric Margenau and Donald B. "Chip" Elitzer.

The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. at City Hall on Allen Street and will be televised live on Pittsfield Community Television Channel 18. At around 9 p.m., television viewers will be invited to vote for their preferred baseball option by calling one of three toll-free numbers.

The event was conceived by the Bouton group to give the public its "turn at bat" regarding the future of Wahconah Park. It is being billed as a special edition of "Perspectives," a television program produced by City Councilor Joseph O. Guzzo. City Councilor Daniel L. Bianchi has been tapped as the moderator.

"We're ready to put ourselves up on the stage in the City Council chambers, in full public view and on live television [to] let the public take its best shot," Elitzer said yesterday. "We are warmly welcoming our competitors to share the podium. ... We have not tried to make this a pep rally for the Bouton proposal."

The telephone poll will be administered by a Midwest polling organization that will be identified during the public meeting, he said. The cost of the service is \$200 for the first 300 telephone calls.

"We don't claim this is a stratified, scientific sample," Elitzer said. "It is what it is, hopefully a comprehensive way for people to register their preference. ... It could go against us."

Guzzo and Bianchi, coincidentally, are two of the three city councilors who steadfastly opposed the ill-fated Pittsfield Civic Authority, which would have built a new downtown stadium. The third was Richard A. Scapin.

Elitzer said Guzzo, as an elected official, was asked to produce the meeting to conform with Pittsfield Community Television guidelines that mandate that

Channel 18 be devoted to governmental programming. Station coordinator David Cachet confirmed this, saying the station organizes programming based on who produces it.

Bianchi was not the first choice for moderator; City Council President Thomas E. Hickey Jr. was. But when Hickey declined because of a scheduling conflict, the group turned to Bianchi. "We're impressed with Dan," Elitzer said. "We think he can do a good job as moderator."

The Parks Commission heard presentations on the competing baseball proposals Aug. 13, but decided not to accept public comments. Chairman Clifford J. Nilan has said the commission will issue a recommendation to Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. next Monday.

Doyle and the five parks commissioners are among those invited to participate tonight, but Elitzer said he was informed that the mayor cannot attend.

Fleisig and Ryan also have other plans. Bouton's group, it appears, will have the stage to itself.

"I was given 48 hours' notice basically, and I won't be able to attend," said Fleisig, who offered his thanks to Bouton for extending an invitation.

The New York City-based entrepreneur said he "would love to talk to anybody and everybody" about his proposal. He said he can be contacted by telephone at (212) 528-8125 or by e-mail at jfleisig@aol.com.

James E. Ryan is one of three principals of Liberty Baseball Holdings LLC, which has proposed to establish a team that would compete in the New England Collegiate Baseball League (NECBL), a summer league for college undergraduates. A resident of Henniker, N.H., he was not planning to attend tonight.

But he said Thomas Hutton, the league's commissioner, may be there. Hutton could not be reached yesterday.

The NECBL operates as a non-profit corporation, featuring low-budget franchises. Ryan said he felt outclassed during the Aug. 13 Parks Commission hearing and is willing to defer to the other proposals. Fleisig's franchise belongs to the professional Northern League; the Bouton group would bring a Northern or Atlantic League team to Pittsfield.

Bill Carey can be reached at bcarey@berkshireeagle.com.

Mower

part that had to be ordered, but the machine has now been repaired by the Department of Public Works, he added.

Mellace also pointed out that he has only four full-time maintenance employees to cover the city's approximately 30 parks, which range in size from 1 acre to 250. There are a few seasonal workers deployed on trimming and hand-mowing, but they aren't allowed to operate the tractors, he explained.

Priority, Mellace said, has to be given to the ballfields that get the most use: Wahconah Park, which crews must get ready for the Pittsfield Astros, and the fields used by the high schools, Babe Ruth teams and other organized leagues.

"And we're anticipating even less funding in the new fiscal year," he noted.

Although Latura's act appeared to be spontaneous, he said it wasn't.

"I've been thinking about doing this for a couple of weeks. But I had so many doctor's appointments, and I home-school him," Latura said, referring to his son. "Today, I said, it's physical education day."

Guillou didn't seem to share his father's enthusiasm for the project.

"I didn't like it because I had to rake it all up," Guillou said.

Deann Hinman, who lives across Osceola Street from the park, said she was pleased at Latura's accomplishment.

"It's too bad that this is what has to happen," said Hinman, whose husband, Mark, is one of several neighborhood residents who have helped put items, such as the baseball field's backstop, in the park. "But it's good that there are people right here who care about what's happening with the park."

Jack Quinn, coach of a Pittsfield West Little League team that practices at Osceola, estimated the grass on the park's baseball field was between 9 and 12 inches high. He said the team lost two balls practicing Wednesday night.

Quinn, who is also assistant superintendent of the Berkshire County House of Correction, said he had to stand at shortstop to hit practice ground balls to his players.

"I'm not pointing my finger at the Parks Department for not doing their job," Quinn added. "They have an impossible job. They're limited, but they've done a great job with what they have to

work with."

Quinn said he's known Latura for a long time. Wednesday night, Quinn said he was at the park taking equipment out of his van for practice, when Latura came by in his car.

"He said, 'How are you going to practice when you can't see the kids?'" Quinn said. "I said, 'What are you going to do?' He said, 'I'll take care of it.'"

Yesterday afternoon, Quinn said Latura left a telephone message on his answering machine at the jail that stated: "Osceola Park has been mowed. Baseball can be played."

"He did it," Quinn said. "I know 13 kids and some coaches that are grateful."

Racial slurs painted on trees, rocks

PITTSFIELD — Police are investigating an incident in Springside Park Friday in which racial slurs were found spray-painted on rocks and trees there.

Capt. Henry R. Dondi said two students at Reid Middle School discovered six samples of the letters "KKK" written in white spray paint in the park as they were returning home from school around 2:55 p.m.

"They didn't see who did it," Dondi said. "There was nobody around."

The letters "KKK" are the initials of the white supremacy organization the Ku Klux Klan.

Dondi said the incident is under investigation by the Police Department's graffiti task force.

Under favorable skies, 423 youngsters (306 boys, 117 girls) participated in the Wild Acres' annual fishing derby last weekend at the popular pond off South Mountain Road, Pittsfield. Friends president Fred P. Garner Jr. said the boys caught 197 of the stocked trout and the girls 70, for a total of 267.

Boys who won fishing rods and reels for catching tagged trout were Mike Ostellino, Joe Koslowski, Mark Dubois, Justin Beckwith, Evan Skubel and Arthur Rayney.

Girls' winners were Emily Kiernan, rod and reel; Kerri Gillo, stuffed animal; and Lauren Gardner, stuffed animal.

Raffle winners were Arthur Paul, boys mountain bike, and Kayla Keyes, girls mounted bike.

Miner advocates parks maintenance

PITTSFIELD — The city's Parks Commission should look into acquiring new playground equipment and maintaining the city's parks, according to Jody Miner.

Miner, who seeks to represent Ward 1 on the City Council, said in a statement released Monday morning that she also hopes that the \$1 million given to Pittsfield by Lawrence A. Bossidy will be used to create "some sort of long-term endowment controlled by the Parks Commission and overseen by the mayor and the City Council."

West Memorial Park and Springside Park would benefit from new playground equipment, said Miner. In addition, she said, the playing fields at Benedict Road should be finished, and the fields at Springside Park and Reid Middle School "should be targeted for repair and maintenance."

Board to take time on lease for Wahconah

By Bill Carey
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The partnership proposing to bring professional baseball to Wahconah Park after the Pittsfield Astros leave has asked the Park Commission to grant it a long-term lease this month, allowing it time to acquire a Northern League franchise.

But Commission Chairman Clifford J. Nilan yesterday said he does not believe a decision is urgent. The board's next meeting, he said, will be in August.

"I'm not sure that we're going to rush in and make a decision on this too quickly," he said. "We're going to look at all proposals."

The partnership of Donald B. "Chip" Elitzer, Jim Bouton and Eric Margenau yesterday faxed a letter to Nilan, a copy of which was made available to The Eagle, outlining "principal points" of their proposal. They include:

- The group seeks a 30-year lease "for the nominal sum of \$1 per year, cancelable by the city if we fail to perform under the terms of the lease at any time, including providing professional baseball each summer season."

- The franchise would be responsible for the expense of maintaining Wahconah Park, including major structural repairs.

- The franchise would agree to make capital improvements "of at least \$25,000 annually" during the lease term.

- The park would be available for other community uses, including high school football, "but excluding other season-long baseball leagues."

"Why such a long lease? We believe that the city and its citizens are best served by granting us a time frame that enables us to

'I'm not sure that we're going to rush in and make a decision on this too quickly,' said Chairman Nilan.

plan projects and financial commitments from the prospective of an owner, not a renter," the letter from Elitzer stated.

The partners attended the Park Commission meeting last month and expected the board to meet again July 23. "My partners and I respectfully request that the commissioners come to that meeting prepared to vote on our proposal for a long-term lease or license agreement for the stadium and its parking areas," Elitzer wrote.

Action on the lease is needed, the partners contend, to give them time to negotiate for a Northern League team before the league's season ends in September and franchise owners firm up plans for next year.

The five-member Park Commission is the controlling authority for city-owned parks. But it would elicit public opinion and work with the mayor and City Council on any such proposal to use Wahconah Park, Nilan said.

The commission also has been informed of another proposal, which would establish a team that would play in the New England Collegiate Baseball League, a summer league for college undergraduates.

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after them again."

Baseball from B1

Nilan said he is not sure the commission could grant such a long-term lease "legally, without an act of the Legislature. I, for one, would never vote for a 30-year lease."

Whatever the details of the Elitzer-Bouton-Margenau proposal, the commission will not be hurried into granting a lease. "I just don't see any urgency in trying to rush this decision," Nilan said.

Elitzer expressed disappointment when told the board will not meet before August.

"We're going to lead public opinion and show the urgency of it," he said. "Among people of good will, it is possible to have a well-considered deal in the time frame we're talking about. ... It's not a good idea to let a [baseball] season get away from us."

Asked if the partners can be flexible on seeking a 30-year

people there.

lease, Elitzer said, "The short answer is yes, but we believe we're already being flexible."

The principal points explain that the city's agreement with the partnership would be "cancelable" and that the group must provide professional baseball each season.

"We think we're offering the city a deal that is essentially unparalleled for the citizens of Pittsfield. We're not doing it out of the goodness of our hearts; we do feel it's a viable financial proposition," but one that must be executed properly, he said.

The lease agreement "would effectively include everything the city should care about. Wahconah Park will no longer be a liability, a cost center for the city. Wahconah Park will be our problem. [The city] will continue to own it, but we will be fully responsible" for maintaining it, he said.

Arlos wants baseball decision delayed

PITTSFIELD — Peter G. Arlos has asked the city's Parks Commission to delay making a decision about the future of baseball at Wahconah Park until after the municipal election on Nov. 11.

"To make the choice now would amount essentially to allowing a lame duck mayor and council to determine the direction of baseball in Pittsfield," Arlos wrote in a prepared statement. "Given their track record, such a decision would undermine public confidence in the process and exacerbate the poison politics in the city."

Arlos, who is running for an at-large seat on the City Council, said that the "slight delay" will not have a negative effect on the process. He recalled December 1988, when the Pittsfield Cubs announced a move to Williamsport, Pa. A New York-Penn League franchise was in place at Wahconah Park by early 1989, said Arlos.

"Predictions of the demise of baseball in Pittsfield have always been erroneous," Arlos wrote.

Baseball proposals subject of Parks Commission meeting

PITTSFIELD — Proposals for use of Wahconah Park for professional baseball will be the subject of a public hearing to be held by the city's Parks Commission on Monday at 7 in the auditorium of Reid Middle School on North Street.

The commission's chairman, Clifford J. Nilan, said yesterday that while the three proponents of plans to bring professional baseball to Wahconah Park will be welcome to address the meeting, "the purpose will be to do what the City Council asked us to do, which is to hold a hearing to receive public comment."

Nilan said that the commission's decision concerning which of the three proposals it will endorse will be made sometime during the week following the meeting.

The commission will consider proposals from Lawrence Bossidy,

who has secured a purchase option on a New York-Penn League baseball team, which he seeks to play in Pittsfield; Jonathan Fleisig, who owns a Northern League franchise that he proposes to situate in Wahconah Park, and a Berkshire County partnership that has announced plans to purchase an independent league team and play it at Wahconah Park.



Circle in the square

Jacinda Griffith, 3, of Pittsfield circumnavigates the fountain in Park Square yesterday afternoon.

Parks board delays making baseball pick

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The Parks Commission has decided to wait an extra week before making its recommendation to the city on three proposals to put baseball teams in Wahconah Park next year.

One mayoral candidate, however, made his choice yesterday.

Grunin backs Bouton group

In a written statement, City Council Vice President Gary S. Grunin said he believes the proposal from the Southern Berkshire partnership of former New York Yankee Jim Bouton, Donald "Chip" Elitzer and Eric Margenau is "clearly the best of the three plans currently on the table for baseball at Wahconah Park."

Grunin was among several city officials who attended the presentation of all three proposals in front of the Parks Commission on Monday night. The panel's recommendation would then be

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sent to the mayor.

"All three proposals were well-prepared," Grunin said in his written statement. "But the Bouton proposal gives us the best opportunity to create a great new baseball experience at Wahconah Park."

In a telephone interview last night, Grunin said he was impressed with the Southern Berkshire group's presentation Monday night, and that the partners answered any lingering questions he had at lunch yesterday.

"I sat through all three proposals Monday night and, to be honest with you, I thought they had the best proposal," Grunin said.

Grunin said he didn't think Jonathan Fleisig, who wants to move the Northern League's dormant Massachusetts MadDogs franchise to Wahconah Park next year, answered the questions he has at Monday's commission hearing.

"Fleisig didn't answer a lot of questions I had in my mind," Grunin said. "When someone asked him something, he said 'We'll work it out. I've heard that a lot.'"

Both Fleisig and Liberty Baseball Holdings LLC, which wants to establish a New England Collegiate Baseball League franchise in Wahconah Park next year, could boast the backing of their respective league commissioners at Monday night's meeting.

The Southern Berkshire group does not have a team. But Elitzer told the Parks Commission that his partnership could join the independent Atlantic League next year if the city lets the group use Wahconah Park in 2002.

Parks Commission Chairman Clifford J. Nilan said Monday night the board would make its recommendation to the city at its meeting Aug. 20. But Nilan said yesterday the commission decided to delay its decision until its Aug. 27 meeting, so it would have more time to consider what he said were "three good proposals."

"They just wanted to have more time to go over them," Nilan said,

referring to the other commissioners.

"I would allow another week if they have any other questions or if they need to get ahold of other people," Nilan added.

When asked what additional information the commission might have to consider, Nilan said Wahconah Park's flood plain might have to be looked at again.

Referring to the Southern Berkshire group's proposal to construct seating boxes on Wahconah Park's roof, Nilan said the commission may have to contact city Building Inspector William Thornton to see if the idea is possible.

"Certainly having more time to debate this issue is not a bad idea," Commissioner Anthony Massimiano said. "As much as everyone says a deadline is an absolute must, I'm not concerned a week would be crucial to anyone's plans."

Fleisig said waiting an extra week would not disrupt his plans.

"If I'm going to have a long relationship with these people, then I'm going to have to work with them," Fleisig said. "If they want to wait another week, that's fine."

"This is about being here long-term," he added. "It's not about a week."

"We're disappointed," Elitzer said. "We thought it was important that a decision be made quickly."

He said if anyone on the Parks Commission has any serious concerns about his group's proposal, they should be addressed now.

"We'll obviously abide by whatever the board's wish is," Elitzer added.

Nilan said his criteria on making his recommendation to the city would be based on what's best for Wahconah Park.

"My opinion is, I want baseball played at Wahconah Park," he said. "It's really not about the stadium at all. As long as baseball is played there, I'm happy."

"But I want our youngsters to be able to use the park for football and soccer," Nilan said. "We need to use that stadium."

Tony Dobrowolski can be reached via e-mail at tdobrowolski@berkshireeagle.com.



Jonathan Fleisig, who owns a dormant Northern League team, was at Pittsfield City Hall yesterday to speak with Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. about moving the team to Wahconah Park.

Franchise owner steps up with Wahconah Park plan

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — City officials will open formal discussions with the owners of the Massachusetts Mad Dogs, a Northern League baseball franchise based in Lynn, concerning the team's possible occupancy of Wahconah Park beginning in the 2002 season.

Jonathan Fleisig, owner of the franchise, met with Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. and Thomas Murphy, director of the city's Department of Community Development, yesterday.

Doyle and Fleisig first met last year in New Jersey, where city officials made a presentation to the Northern League in which they touted the benefits of locating a team in a new downtown stadium, should one be built.

"I was very encouraged by what Mr. Fleisig had to say about his ballclub and his desire to explore the option of moving to Pittsfield," Doyle said in a prepared statement. "Since Wahconah Park

'Mr. Fleisig brings to the table an established ballclub ... and a strong financial background,' said Mayor Doyle.

cannot be upgraded to the standards established by the New York-Penn League, it is only logical that we market the facility to other leagues. Mr. Fleisig brings to the table an established ballclub, an impressive résumé of ownership in minor league sports and a strong financial background. We will evaluate his detailed and complete proposal along with any others we may receive."

The Mad Dogs have been "on

hiatus" since the end of the 1999 season, when they vacated the facility in Lynn because it did not meet Northern League standards. The team's players were sold, but Fleisig said yesterday that he foresees no difficulty in reassembling a squad under the team's manager, George "Boomer" Scott, a former Boston Red Sox first baseman. Wahconah Park, Fleisig said yesterday, is "fine" by the league.

Indeed, Fleisig and Doyle released a letter addressed to Doyle from Miles Wolff, commissioner of the Northern League, in which Wolff offers the league's help in assuring the success of Fleisig's proposal for a Pittsfield franchise.

Wolff also referred to a South County partnership composed of former Yankee pitcher Jim Bouton, Donald "Chip" Elitzer and Eric Margenau, which is seeking a 30-year lease of Wahconah Park. The partners have

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said that they would purchase and play an independent league baseball team at Wahconah. Bouton and Elitzer have made specific references to the Northern League.

"I have never spoken to these men on the possibility of purchasing a franchise," reads Wolff's letter, which is dated July 15. "I would like to make this statement as clear as possible: The Northern League does not have at this time an expansion franchise for sale, nor am I aware of any franchise negotiating with this group. Furthermore, the sale of a franchise would need the approval of the Northern League board of directors. We would like to see [Fleisig] and [Northern League franchise owner Robert Wirz] move into Pittsfield and would encourage the Boutin group or other local interests to work with these gentlemen, not against them, with regards to building a future for Northern League baseball in your community."

In a telephone interview yesterday, Elitzer said that the partners have talked with Wolff, but that an expansion franchise "was not what we were thinking of." He also said that the partners have had discussions with officials of the Atlantic League.

'Cynical ploy'

"There are three dormant franchises in the Northern League, one of which is owned by Mr. Fleisig," said Elitzer, who characterized the Fleisig proposal as a means to keep the cause of a new

stadium in Pittsfield connected to political life support systems.

"The three of us have been speculating about why we hadn't heard anything, and we figured that they were stringing us out until someone came up with an alternative to our proposal because we are not beholden to anyone — economically or politically. ... Our vision — to make a long-term commitment to keeping baseball in Wahconah Park — drives a stake into the new stadium proposal. ... A decision for us is an irrevocable decision for Wahconah Park. It should be decided now for the benefit of the city of Pittsfield. ... For the mayor to spring this on us is a cynical ploy to keep alive the dead horse of a new stadium."

The partnership's proposal to lease Wahconah Park for 30 years demonstrates its commitment to sustaining professional baseball at Wahconah Park, whereas proposals such as Fleisig's carry no such guarantee.

"We wouldn't play in a new park if one were built for us," Elitzer said yesterday.

"Nothing would prevent Fleisig from leaving Pittsfield if he got a better deal somewhere else. ... If we were given the lease on Wahconah Park, we would have no trouble buying a franchise, probably in pretty short order," Boutin added.

Elitzer said that his partnership's proposal has widespread support among citizens and in the city's business community.

"However, the way politics works, it is at least possible that the mayor-appointed Park Commission and the mayor-dominated City Council could put

through and approve a lease [with Fleisig's franchise]," Elitzer said yesterday. "That would be highly cynical and highly disrespectful of the wishes of voters. ... We are site-specific. We will only play in Wahconah Park, and we will only make the investment in a franchise when we have Wahconah to play in."

Fleisig said yesterday that his next step will be to consult with his attorney about drawing up a proposed lease. He declined to discuss the terms that might be included in the lease.

Doyle said that he will not support a long-term lease of Wahconah Park. Neither the mayor nor Fleisig offered a definition of long term.

Asked about the timing of his proposal in relation to the South County partnership's announcement of its plans in June, Fleisig said that he also chose to wait until after the June 5 referendum on the Pittsfield Civic Authority. He said that he also wanted to satisfy himself that Pittsfield was in a position to give his proposal a fair hearing, away from spotlights cast by other "suitors."

"I'm not playing defense," Fleisig said yesterday. "I have a Northern League team. ... The only beat I dance to is the city's beat. I'm not playing defense because I need everyone's help. ... I had to wait until Pittsfield was truly 'single.'"

Fleisig said that he is willing to discuss allowing citizens to buy shares in the team; he also declared that he would work with the New England Collegiate Baseball League on arrangements that would allow the league to play at Wahconah Park.

Covering all the bases: Partners making rounds to pitch Wahconah lease

By Bill Carey
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The partnership seeking a long-term lease of Wahconah Park is stepping up its public campaign to convince city officials to grant the lease.

Donald B. "Chip" Elitzer and Jim Bouton yesterday defended their proposal to replace the Pittsfield Astros, who are leaving Wahconah Park after this season, with an independent league baseball team. In a visit to The Eagle, the partners reiterated that they need a lease soon if they are to field a team by opening day 2002.

They have made the same case to the Rotary Club and City Council, among other forums.

Elitzer is an investment banker who lives in Great Barrington; Bouton, a North Egremont resident, is a former New York Yankees pitcher and author of the 1970 baseball exposé "Ball Four." Eric Margenau, the partnership's third member, is president of United Sports Ventures in

New York City; he owns a house in Stockbridge.

The partners want a 30-year lease of the city-owned stadium. They pledge in return to spend \$1.5 million to acquire a franchise, build a team and renovate the stadium by next year and to invest at least \$25,000 annually on capital improvements.

Elitzer said the latter figure is based on an agreement that the Lowell Spinners have for the use of LeLacheur Park in that city. But the partnership is well aware that the cost of maintaining Wahconah Park, built in 1919, will likely exceed that amount.

For instance, city officials have informed the partners that repairing the sewer system could cost four times their annual contribution. The partners will deal with it, Elitzer said.

"Whatever it takes to keep Wahconah Park open and safe and comfortable to the fans will be our responsibility," he

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Donald B. Elitzer, left, and Jim Bouton outline their pl team to play at Wahconah Park during a meeting at The

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declared. "For sure, over the next 30 years, it will need major structural work. We are going to perform thoughtful upgrades on a year-to-year basis."

The proposed lease is "wonderfully self-policing," Elitzer contends, because the city can break off the arrangement if the partnership fails to provide professional baseball each summer as promised. "Our [proposed lease] is contractually cancelable the minute we default on any of the terms," he explained.

The partners would accept a shorter-term lease that is automatically renewable on the same terms, but that amounts to the same thing, Elitzer said. He added, "None of what we have said is non-negotiable."

They want to involve the community by selling public shares in the team. But they also are prepared to go it alone financially.

"We don't have to look outside of our little partnership of three to come up with that million and a half bucks," Elitzer said of the projected start-up cost.

Bouton said the partnership will market Wahconah Park as a historic venue, much like the stadium at baseball's Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y.

"I don't think anybody's marketed the ballpark. ... We can care for it and we can make it playable," he said.

Independent league baseball — the partners plan to buy either a Northern League or an Atlantic League franchise — is more loyal than Major League-affiliated baseball, Bouton said.

Major League teams exact a percentage of the gross revenue of their affiliates and demand

minimum seating and other requirements of minor league franchises. When those requirements can't be met, they play off one community against another for better facilities. "That is the crime Major League Baseball has been perpetrating on the American public," he said.

The partners promise a team that would not relocate. A team affiliated with the Mets or the Red Sox "is a tough sell for Yankees fans," Bouton said by way of example. "We're saying: 'Come see your own team.'"

Despite these assurances, the partners claim that city officials are waiting for a signal from Berkshire Sports & Events LLC, the partnership whose proposal to build a stadium at West and Center streets died with the June 5 referendum that torpedoed the Pittsfield Civic Authority.

"I don't know anything about that," responded Clifford J. Nilan, chairman of the Pittsfield Park Commission. The commission has authority over city-owned parks. Elitzer's group is pushing the commission to approve a long-term lease for Wahconah Park this month, but the board will not meet before August, Nilan said.

The commission currently has two proposals before it: that of the South County partnership and a proposal to establish a franchise that would play in the New England Collegiate Baseball League. It plans to weigh those proposals carefully, Nilan said.

Curt Preisser, spokesman for Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr., also noted that multiple options exist.

"That certainly is one of the options out there," he said of the Elitzer group. "There are other options with regard to Wahconah Park. We haven't received a detailed proposal from Mr. Elitzer."

10 Years Ago: July 18, 1991

► Springside House, a city landmark since the late 19th century, would be given a new coat of paint by more than 100 volunteers during a daylong operation on Sept.

21. R. Bruce Farren, GE's manager of community relations, said that the paint and other materials would be purchased with \$15,000 donated by local GE businesses and the Elfun Society. 7/18/01

50 Years Ago: July 19, 1951

► Osceola Park held a "Sparkle Plenty" hair contest yesterday and the winners were: shortest, George Tubbs; curliest, Virginia Puzio; longest, Gail Monteroso; lightest, Kathleen Gogan; nicest braids, Mary Ann Hendrickson; darkest, Beatrice Tubbs; best groomed, Patricia Gogan; and straightest, Sue Hendrickson. 7/19/01

Park board considering options for new holiday carnival location 6/27/01

By Jeff LeDuc
Special to The Eagle

PITTSFIELD — The Common on First Street should be the "last option" considered for an annual Memorial Day weekend carnival, according to the chairman of the city's Park Commission.

Robert J. Smith commented during a meeting of the commission Monday where use of the site was questioned. Although it took no formal action, the commission agreed to consider proposals advanced by Berkshire County Treasurer Peter G. Arlos and Ward 2 City Councilor James L. Brassard concerning events on Pittsfield parkland.

Arlos sought a public hearing to discuss the future location of the carnival. He argued that the Pittsfield Common location was decided upon this year without a public hearing. The event could have been held at more suitable and less problematic locale, such as the Wahconah Park parking lot, Arlos said.

'Disturbs the peace'

Such an event "disturbs the peace and tranquility of a large elderly population" situated immediately adjacent to the Common in the Central Annex building, the former city councilor said.

Another petition, sponsored by Brassard, cited a need for better communication between the Park Commission and city councilors on such large undertakings.

Communication with councilors whose constituents are directly affected by the events is particularly important, said Brassard. He added that he was "shocked" to learn that this year's carnival was being held at the Common instead of the Berkshire Crossing shopping center. The change came to his attention, said Brassard, when a constituent reported to him that she awoke to the sounds of large trucks unloading carnival equipment.

The councilor asked the commission to notify the council in advance of all events that involve amplified music, noise and bright lights taking place on the city's parkland.

While the carnival is a popular event, Brassard said in a telephone interview yesterday, "It's a case of nobody wants this in their back yard."

There were numerous opportunities for Brassard to learn about the carnival's location in his ward, said Park Commission member

Clifford J. Nilan. Nevertheless, the panel agreed to notify ward councilors in the future.

Produced by Gillette Shows Inc., the Pittsfield carnival is currently sponsored by the Pittsfield Babe Ruth League. The carnival, held annually in Pittsfield, has previously been located at Wahconah Park and most recently in Wal-Mart's Berkshire Crossing parking lot.

A representative of Gillette Shows did not return a telephone call seeking comment.

Jim Hassett, who is associated with Pittsfield Babe Ruth, said that Gillette has worked for years — against Wal-Mart corporate policy — to hold the event on the Berkshire Crossing property.

This year, said Hassett, lease arrangements with Home Depot and a change in management at Wal-Mart doomed the location for the carnival. He also recalled that

Gillette made efforts to divert sound away from the residential areas around the Common by positioning the attractions toward First Street and away from the housing complex for the elderly on Second Street.

Despite the near-constant rain at this year's event, Hassett said that it raised significant funds for the Pittsfield Babe Ruth as it has in the past. He described the carnival as an entertaining way to keep the youth baseball program affordable for its participants.

In other business, the commission heard a proposal to lease and renovate Wahconah Park to attract a Northern League baseball team to Pittsfield.

The proposal was advanced by former New York Yankees pitcher Jim Bouton of Egremont, who attended the meeting with his partners, Eric Margenau and Chip Elitzer.

Monday, November 19, 2001

Hathaway will honor Fleisig pact

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Mayor-elect Sara Hathaway said yesterday that she will not attempt to override an agreement that would give a minor league baseball team the right to play in Wahconah Park.

"I don't think I could do that if I wanted to," she said.

Hathaway contacted The Eagle concerning an article that appeared Saturday in which it was reported that comments she made on a radio talk show raised the possibility that she might seek to override a Parks Commission recommendation that a license to use Wahconah Park be negotiated with Jonathan Fleisig, owner of a Northern League team formerly known as the Massachusetts Mad Dogs.

Asked by Dan Valenti of WBRK for her

'My vision for Wahconah Park is a long-term vision. ... I don't want people to feel that there's a secret ax that's going to fall.'

opinion on the "baseball issue," Hathaway replied that she has "a few irons in the fire" with respect to management of Wahconah Park.

She also said on the show that largely because she hasn't "got everything lined up," she viewed as "useful" a provision in state law that would allow her to void any contract entered into by Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. during his last 90 days in office. That clock started ticking Oct. 7, two days after the Parks Commission voted to recommend that the city negotiate a license with Fleisig.

Yesterday the mayor-elect said that her administration will "honor the agreement" that is currently the subject of negotiations between Fleisig and city officials.

"I see no conflict between the Parks Commission's recommendation for a two-year license and my plan for Wahconah Park," Hathaway said. "I hope that we have the most successful season ever for baseball at Wahconah Park and that Pittsfield will support the Northern League."

Hathaway did not provide specifics

concerning her plan for Wahconah Park except to say that she views it as a hub for economic development, particularly in the areas surrounding the park.

"I look forward to using Wahconah Park as a selling point for our minor league team," she said. "I also see it helping to advance economic development in that section of the city. My vision for Wahconah Park is a long-term vision. ... I don't see a reason to undermine this upcoming season or to undermine a two-year agreement. I don't want people to feel that there's a secret ax that's going to fall."

Hathaway said that she has spoken with Fleisig by telephone "and assured him that I'm not out to stab him in the back and that my priority and my job is to protect Pittsfield's interests, and those include keeping baseball at Wahconah Park."

Council wants public airing of Wahconah Park plans

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — City officials yesterday expressed support for a proposal that calls for assembling the proponents of various plans for the future use of Wahconah Park and allowing them to present their respective cases to the Parks Commission.

On Wednesday night, City Council President Thomas E. Hickey Jr. won the council's unanimous endorsement of a petition that advocates instituting a "request for proposals" process to help the commission evaluate

The City Council advocates instituting a 'request for proposals' process to help the Parks Commission evaluate ideas for the use of Wahconah Park.

ideas for the park.

Such a process, said Hickey, "will put an end to doing this on the front page of The Berkshire Eagle."

To date, three proposals have been advanced. One, backed by a partnership that includes former New York Yankee Jim Bouton of Egremont, envisions the grant of long-term rights to the partner-

ship, which would then purchase an independent league team and play games in Wahconah Park.

Another plan, advocated by Jonathan Fleisig, a New York City commodities trader who owns a Northern League franchise called the Massachusetts Mad Dogs, envisions reactivating that team and bringing it to Wahconah Park in the 2002 season.

A third proposal, from the New England Collegiate Baseball League, would have a summer team of college undergraduates use Wahconah Park for games.

Yesterday, officials said that while a full-blown request-for-proposals process would not be appropriate, largely because it's unlikely that the city would grant property rights to Wahconah Park

via a lease, a formal presentation of the various proposals in a public forum would be.

"The Parks Commission will play a critical role in evaluating the proposals that are on the table," Thomas Murphy, director of the city's Department of Community Development, said yesterday. "It will be helpful to present them to the commission and allow

it to make a decision on the future use of Wahconah Park. We feel comfortable that everything that could come forward in the way of a proposal for next season is now before us."

Clifford J. Nilan, chairman of the Parks Commission, also expressed support for the idea yesterday.

"It will have everything open and public," Nilan said. "Anybody who's interested can submit a proposal, then we would sit down with the mayor and make a recommendation."

PARK, continued on A5

Park from A1

Nilan said that two hearings will be scheduled for next month. At the first, the proposals would be aired; at the second, the commission would discuss the matter.

"If it's done fairly and sincerely allows the comparison of apples to apples, it's a good thing," said Donald "Chip" Elitzer of Great Barrington, a member of the partnership that includes Bouton and Eric Margenau of New York. "... What we've been asking for is a fair hearing, and as long as other parties are held to the same criteria, fine, but we also know that time is of the essence."

Community Notes

Parks board suggests conditions for Wahconah Park use

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Proponents of various plans for the future of Wahconah Park have received a list of items that the city's Parks Commission expects them to address at a meeting next week.

In a letter dated yesterday, the commission invites proponents to a public meeting Monday at 7 p.m. in the City Council chamber. There, the commission will hear "proposals for professional and collegiate baseball at Wahconah Park."

The commission's recommendation

concerning which proposal should be accepted will be announced at its regular meeting on Aug. 20, the letter states.

The 1 1/2-page letter lists eight "suggested ... minimum conditions that should be addressed in your proposal to operate a professional or collegiate baseball team at Wahconah Park."

Team ownership

First on the list is "written contractual ownership of a professional baseball team or a binding purchase-and-sale agreement for the purchase of a team."

Although that would appear to elimi-

nate from consideration a proposal from a South Berkshire-based partnership that includes former New York Yankee Jim Bouton, such is not the case, officials said yesterday.

"We're proposing that they address these points," said Clifford J. Nilan, chairman of the five-member Parks Commission. "Essentially, they'll have to address how they're going to have baseball at Wahconah Park next season."

Curt Preisser, spokesman for Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr., agreed.

"This is what the Parks Commission is

expecting to see, but if someone chooses to come in with a proposal that does not contain these elements, then that's OK, it won't 'disqualify' them."

The partnership, which also includes Chip Elitzer of Great Barrington and Eric Margenau of New York City and Stockbridge, proposes to play an independent league team in Wahconah Park starting in 2002. No team has been purchased, however, and the partners contend that a long-term lease or license of Wahconah Park is essential to advancement of their plan to buy a team and to assure its pres-

ence in the city for many years to come.

"I have been told that this is a suggested list and not a requirement, and I'm glad to hear that because we have a different take on what should be the focus for evaluating the proposals," Elitzer said yesterday. "We hope to address all the concerns of the commissioners — and then some — and we will certainly place the emphasis differently from where it is placed in the letter to the petitioners."

Jonathan Fleisig, a New York City-

PARK, continued on B4

Park from B1

based commodities trader who owns the New England Mad Dogs, a Northern League franchise that he proposes to locate in Wahconah Park, said yesterday that he is looking forward to Monday's meeting.

"I think [the commission] has every right to ask all those questions and more," he said. "If you're moving into someone's neighborhood, they're going to want to know as much as they can about you."

In addition to owning a franchise, Fleisig also meets at least one other of the commission's suggested minimum conditions. He possesses "a letter of reference from the franchise's presiding authority endorsing the proposal."

A third proposal from the New England Collegiate Baseball League envisions using Wahconah Park for college baseball games.

Other proposed conditions listed in the commission's letter include "three years of documented financial disclosure (personal income tax returns) for each owner of the entity that owns or proposes to own a franchise." Such information would be held in confidence, the letter states.

Also, it reads, proponents should consider a "minimum two-season license (with option to renew) that includes a minimum of \$25,000 annual fee payable to the city. The investment by the petitioner into mutually agreed-to improvements to Wahconah Park will reduce the payment to the city dollar for dollar for all documented improvements." 8/8/01

College league withdraws bid to place team at Wahconah

By Bill Carey
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Whatever the face of baseball is at Wahconah Park next year, it apparently will not involve a summer league for college undergraduates.

The New England Collegiate Baseball League (NECBL) has informed the city it "will not be entertaining" a franchise application for Pittsfield.

The league's withdrawal leaves two entities proposing to bring independent professional teams to

Wahconah Park and Lawrence A. Bossidy Jr., who would base a New York-Penn League club at the park while a new stadium is built.

In a letter to the Parks Commission, NECBL Commissioner Thomas C. Hutton said the not-for-profit league does not wish to influence the city's choice of a professional baseball franchise. He referred to an Aug. 13 meeting at which the commission heard proposals from the NECBL, Massachusetts Mad Dogs owner Jonathan Fleisig and the partnership of Jim Bouton, Eric Margenau

and Donald B. "Chip" Elitzer.

Fleisig has indicated a willingness to share Wahconah Park with the collegiate league; Bouton's group is opposed to the idea.

"There was much discussion at the [Aug. 13] meeting about the willingness of the two professional groups to 'take in' the NECBL at Wahconah Park next season," Hutton wrote.

"We are concerned that a significant and long-reaching decision affecting your taxpayers might be influenced by either the willingness of one club to possibly share

space or the candid admission of the other that it could not. This would be unfair to the city in light of the importance of the decision you face."

Reached by telephone at his office in Warwick, R.I., Hutton said a collegiate team would work "if we were the only show in town" or if it joined an existing professional franchise. But he described the current situation in Pittsfield as too complicated.

"I saw that the NECBL could become a very important factor in

the decision to be made up there," he said. "We weren't comfortable being in that position."

A three-man partnership known as Liberty Baseball Holdings LLC proposed forming a collegiate club to play at Wahconah Park. But James E. Ryan of Henniker, N.H., one of the principals, said he felt outclassed by the Fleisig and Bouton proposals during the Parks Commission meeting.

NECBL franchises are low-budget operations without the ability to carry out renovations

such as those proposed at Wahconah Park, he said.

"We're not in the position to bring the kind of money and restorative plan to the fore as the others are."

Ryan said his partnership is talking to other communities and still plans to apply for an NECBL franchise.

As for Pittsfield, he said, "right now is certainly not the time to do that with everything that's at stake."

Bill Carey can be reached via email at bcarey@berkshireeagle.com

Making a pitch for Wahconah

In wake of new stadium battle, plan for 'antique' gets spotlight

By Anthony Fyden

Jim Bouton believes in Wahconah Park. The former New York Yankee and groundbreaking baseball author believes that the 82-year-old yard can host exciting professional baseball for years to come. "I love Wahconah Park," Bouton said this week. "I'm one for renovating the old houses. I love the history."

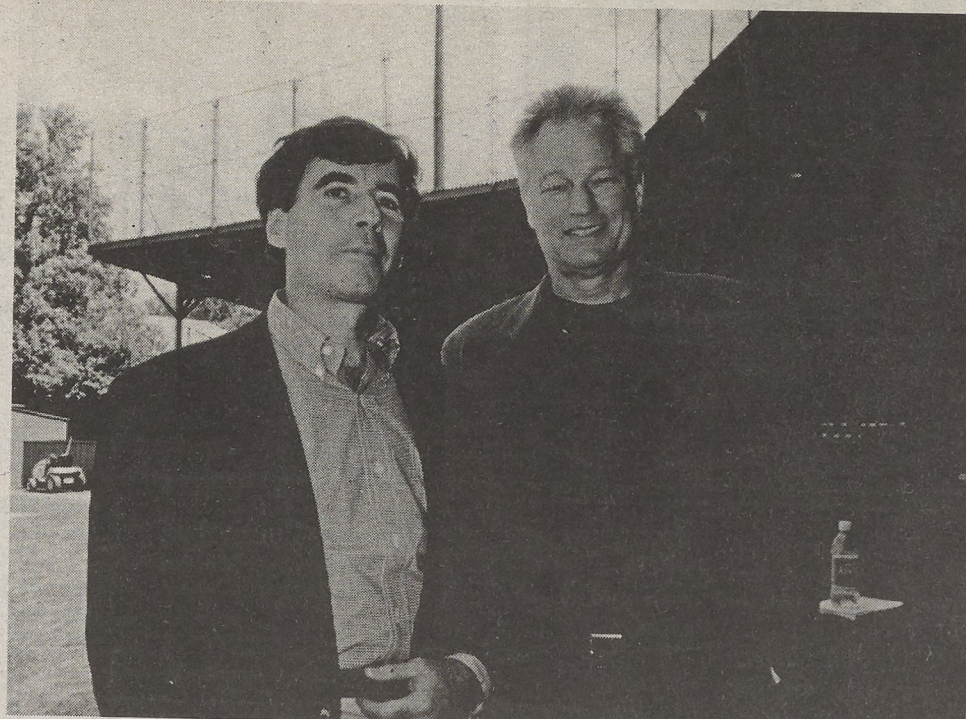
Bouton and two business partners, Chip Elitzer and Eric Margenau, all of whom live or have homes in Berkshire County, want to bring a Northern League team to Wahconah Park beginning in the 2002 season. They say they will make immediate improvements to the city-owned park, and commit to more improvements each season, perhaps even extensive renovations.

And in a separate proposal, the group hopes to generate support for a downtown civic center, which would host professional minor league hockey — the group has guaranteed to secure a team. Margenau is president of United Sports Ventures, a separate organization associated with minor league hockey.

While the downtown arena plan is in the mix, the Wahconah Park plan is much more tangible. The Pittsfield Astros are playing their final season at the park before moving to a new stadium in Troy beginning next season.

With apparently slim hopes of landing another affiliated team in the near future, an independent league team could be the city's only hope of retaining professional baseball.

And according to Bouton, the caliber of Northern League will not only be as good, but



Chip Elitzer and former Major League pitcher Jim Bouton are part of a group hoping to bring Northern League baseball to Wahconah Park. The duo met with city officials, and visited the ballpark, on Monday.

better than affiliated Single A minor league ball — the level at which the New York Penn League Pittsfield Astro's, Wahconah's current tenants, play.

While Single A affiliated teams are mostly comprised of young players recently drafted, some right out of high school, independent squads offer a more diverse group. Most inde-

pendent league players are older and more experienced than their Single A counterparts.

"Independent league baseball is a higher quality baseball," Bouton says. In fact, the former pitcher knows independent league baseball well. In 1977, a few years after he had won 20 games in a season for the New York

See WAHCONAH page 9

The Pittsfield Gazette June 21, 2001

Wahconah Park eyed for Northern League franchise in 2002

continued from page 1

Yankees, Bouton found himself on the outside of the majors looking in.

His book, "Ball Four" had shaken up the baseball world — and alienated the hierarchy. Bouton landed in Oregon, playing for an independent team, before eventually making a remarkable major league comeback at the age of 39.

Without independent ball, it is possible that Bouton's playing days would have ended prematurely. "There were very few affiliated teams that were going to give me a spot on their roster," Bouton recalls.

A Northern League team, he

added, would be strongly identified with Berkshire County and the partners plan to hold a naming contest for the franchise.

While Wahconah Park critics have scoffed at its famous "sun delays" — homeplate faces the setting sun — Bouton said the new regime would celebrate them. Fans, for example, could try to predict if a sun delay would take place.

Elitzer, whose background is in investment banking, said that residents would have an opportunity to purchase stock in the team, reinforcing the concept of a community franchise.

Bouton and his partners stepped forward with their proposal after voters quashed a plan to build a new downtown stadium at the corner of West & Center streets.

The group, in fact, had considered going public earlier, but decided not to further muddy the waters surrounding the new stadium/civic authority vote.

After making their plan public with an "open letter" to city councilors, the proposal yielded a chilly reception on some fronts. Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr., an advocate for the downtown stadium project, sounded less than enthusiastic.

The Berkshire Eagle, whose parent company, MediaNews Group, is a partner in the failed Berkshire Sports & Events project, slammed the Wahconah effort in an editorial.

In the face of the unsurprising criticism, Bouton and his partners are slowly trying to build support. They appeared at a "brainstorming" session this past week at Bousquet ski area.

On Monday, they met with Doyle and community development director Tom Murphy. Elitzer called the meeting "encouraging," suggesting that the mayor is at least open to the plan.

Later on Monday, Bouton and Elitzer visited Wahconah Park during the Astros' "media day." The duo chatted with reporters on the field they hope to call home next year. Later, when asked to demonstrate a "knuckleball" grip, the lanky and fit Bouton eagerly took the ball

and tossed it a few times to onlookers.

While Bouton's group boosts their plan as retaining professional baseball "without any cost to the taxpayers," they are looking for something from the city: a long-term commitment.

In fact, the group hopes to lease Wahconah Park for 20 or 30 years. The long-term lease, Elitzer said, would facilitate financing opportunities while protecting the partners' investment.

Elitzer added that the deal would include assurances that the owners would field a professional team and that annual upgrades of Wahconah

Park would continue.

While the group has not set a timeline, they clearly want to get things moving. Ideally, Elitzer said, the new tenants could market their product during this baseball season.

Renovations to Wahconah, he added, would take place incrementally. Early improvements would likely be cosmetic. In the future, bathrooms, locker rooms, concessions and seating could be renovated.

A coat of paint, Bouton added, could be the first order of business. "It's not going to be the [New York] Mets' colors," he said. "It's not going to be blue and orange."

Park suitors will be accommodating

To the Editor of THE EAGLE:

Based on the comments by Park Commission Chairman Cliff Nilan in the Aug. 17 article, "Parks Board Delays Making Baseball Pick," my partners and I believe that we need to clarify and reinforce our position with respect to other uses of Wahconah Park:

1. All current uses of Wahconah Park will continue, including high school sports, and we are willing to have that commitment be one of our performance hurdles for renewal or continuation of our long-term agreement.

2. We believe that Wahconah Park is a valuable asset belonging to the citizens of Pittsfield, and that it has been an under-utilized asset. We will encourage educational, charitable, civic, and recreational groups to host events there. To deny any request, we must show "reasonable cause," and we are willing to put such language in our long-term agreement.

3. The only use of Wahconah Park that we oppose is cohabitation with another season-long baseball league, such as the Collegiate League. Tournament play or occasional high school games, as long as they didn't conflict with our own playing schedule, would be fine.

The Board of Park Commissioners should not — and probably cannot, legally — cede the city's ultimate authority over what happens at Wahconah or any of Pittsfield's other parks. In the case of Wahconah, we are asking the city to delegate to us, through a carefully negotiated contract, the role of custodian. Just as we are willing to assume the city's future financial obligations with respect to maintenance and repair (\$500,000 over the past five years), we need to have the delegated authority to manage the use of the park in the best interests of Pittsfield. Insisting on responsibility without authority is almost never a good idea.

A second concern that the Parks Commission apparently has, again based on the Aug. 17 Eagle article, is the feasibility of certain capital improvements that we have proposed in our facilities plan for the park, such as resurfacing the parking lot or constructing "not-so-luxury boxes." We respectfully submit the following points for the commissioners' consideration:

1. Any permanent modifications that we propose now or in the future to the city's property

must, of course, be subject to the city's review and approval, including consideration of environmental regulations and engineering feasibility. Vetting on any such item in our proposal is not necessary prior to our signing a long-term agreement with the city, and should not be cause for delay.

2. Wahconah Park is a "fixer-upper's dream." If any of our proposed improvements prove to be unfeasible, we will have no problem finding other valid ways to spend at least \$250,000 on the park before Opening Day 2002, and therefore have no reservations about making that contractual commitment.

Our sense of urgency in awaiting the Parks Board decision is based on the fact that the 2001 baseball season is rapidly drawing to a close, and both the Atlantic and the Northern Leagues will soon be locking in their playing schedules for the 2002 season. Since we have stated on many occasions that we seek to negotiate an agreement that is fair and acceptable to the city, let's leave enough time to do that.

DONALD ELITZER
Great Barrington, Aug. 18, 2001

Poll to follow live telecast on Wahconah team options

PITTSFIELD — A public meeting at which citizens' opinions concerning the future of summer baseball at Wahconah Park will be televised live on Pittsfield Community Television Channel 18.

At the conclusion of the meeting, which is scheduled for 7 p.m. tomorrow in the City Council chamber in City Hall, viewers will be given the opportunity to call a toll-free number to register their preference for one of three proposals for Wahconah Park, said Chip Elitzer of Great Barrington, a member of the South County partnership that is sponsoring the meeting.

City Councilor Joseph O. Guzzo of Ward 7 will produce the television coverage as a special edition of his show, "Perspectives," said Elitzer. The meeting will be moderated by City Councilor Daniel L. Bianchi of Ward 6.

Pittsfield takes three pitches



Jim Bouton addresses the Parks Commission last night on his plan to bring a baseball team to Wahconah Park. A second proposal was made by, from far left, New England Collegiate Baseball League Commissioner Thomas Hutton and Jim Ryan, and a third plan was detailed by Jonathan Fleisig, sitting behind Bouton at right, owner of the Massachusetts Mad Dogs.

Photo by Mandana Marsh

Wahconah Park proposals outlined

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The three entities proposing either professional or collegiate baseball teams to play in Wahconah Park next year pitched their proposals to the Parks Commission last night.

The meeting had been scheduled as a public hearing but, before it began, Chairman Clifford J. Nilan said the commission had decided not to include public comment.

Nilan said the five-member commission would take the

three proposals under advisement and probably make its recommendation at its meeting Monday.

Eight minimum conditions

Under terms of a 1 1/2-page letter the commission sent to each of the three entities were eight suggested minimum conditions they were required to address to operate a professional or collegiate baseball team at Wahconah Park.

First on that list is "written contractual ownership of a professional baseball team or a binding purchase-and-sales

agreement for the purchase of a team."

New England Collegiate Baseball League Commissioner Thomas Hutton personally endorsed a proposal by Jim Ryan of New Hampshire to bring an NECBL team to Pittsfield. Northern League Commissioner and founder Miles Wolff endorsed a proposal from Jonathan Fleisig, owner of the Massachusetts Mad Dogs, a dormant league franchise that played in Lynn.

"The Northern League would very much like to be in Pittsfield and would like to be

here with Jonathan Fleisig," Wolff said.

Investment banker Donald D. "Chip" Elitzer of Great Barrington, and former major league pitcher and "Ball Four" author Jim Bouton of North Egremont and Eric Margenau of West Stockbridge, who have proposed bringing an independent league team to Wahconah Park next year, do not have a team.

However, Elitzer said that if the city and his group could come to an agreement on the major business positions in

PLANS, continued on A4

Plans from A1

their proposal, his group could draw up a contract and be able to secure a franchise in the independent Atlantic League to play in Wahconah Park in 2002.

Elitzer said his group had received a commitment from Atlantic League President and Chief Executive Officer Frank Boulton for a team to play in the seven-team loop on a conditional basis in 2002. Unlike the Northern League, which plays an 86-game schedule, the Atlantic League plays a 144-game schedule that includes 72 home games between early May and mid-September.

Elitzer said that if the group cannot remain in the Atlantic League beyond next year, it would pursue a Northern League franchise.

Elitzer, Bouton and Margenau's 18-page proposal was more detailed than the others and included a cross-promotional marketing plan involving the county's other cultural institutions, Wahconah Park's historic past, and Bouton's national reputation that they said would attain their goal of doubling the 2,000 average attendance at 4,500-seat Wahconah Park attained by New York-Penn League teams.

"If we draw only 2,000 in attendance, we will barely be breaking even," Elitzer said.

"We're going to be part of the cultural mix," Bouton added. "You can only eat so much sushi."

Elitzer said his group would lease Wahconah Park from the city but be the sole arbiter of any other activity that took place there. Bouton said the group

would not stand in the way of high school football games being played at Wahconah Park, but would object to high school baseball game unless they were state or American Legion tournaments.

The group also said it would not be willing to share Wahconah Park with a New England Collegiate Baseball League franchise, because it would overuse the field.

Fleisig, however, had no objections to sharing the park with the NECBL, which Ryan said would play only 20 home games.

"I love baseball," Fleisig said. "If we can get another 20 games in there, let's do it."

Fleisig, who proposed working in partnership with the city, also had no objections to high school sports being played in the park.

Upgrade plans

Elitzer said the group would invest at least \$250,000 of its own money in the repair and upgrading of Wahconah Park before the beginning of the 2002 season, and would invest at least \$25,000 in each subsequent year of the agreement in the repair and upgrading of the park.

He said that, while the group would prefer a single 30-year agreement with the city to run Wahconah Park, it would be willing to accept an agreement as short as one year as long as it was renewable at his group's option based on performance criteria his group set.

Fleisig said he would ask the city for a three-year lease with an option to renew. He said he would pay \$250,000 for maintenance and expenses at the park during the life of his three-year lease with the city.

Fleisig said he was forced to

leave Lynn when that city's 60-year-old ballpark was condemned. He said that when the Mad Dogs played in Lynn, they broke all attendance records set by a Class AA Eastern League team that played in the same stadium in the 1980s.

He said Mad Dogs General Manager Michael Cardenas would serve the same function in Pittsfield if Fleisig is awarded a franchise.

"Nobody is better at getting revenues than Mike, especially in an old facility," Fleisig said.

He also said that former Boston Red Sox slugger George "Boomer" Scott, who played in Pittsfield as a minor leaguer, would be the team's coach in Pittsfield.

"He can't wait to come back here," Fleisig said.

Elitzer and Bouton insisted that because they live in the area, they would not move the team if a better stadium proposal came along. When Parks Commissioner Anthony Massimiano asked Fleisig the same question, he said, "Look, I want to be here. Do you want my word or to sign something? I want to stay in the Northeast."

Ryan said that the NECBL is a 10-team summer league made up of collegiate baseball players that is on a par with the more well-known Cape Cod League. The league does not begin play until June, Ryan said.

He said he first approached Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. with the idea of having an NECBL team in Wahconah Park in March. A nonprofit organization, the NECBL is affiliated with Major League Baseball. Each team's games are set up by volunteers, he said.

Special act of Legislature required to lease Wahconah Park for 30 years

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — To lease Wahconah Park — or any other city-owned property — for 30 years would require permission of the state Legislature, something that could take six to nine months to obtain, officials said last week.

Donald "Chip" Elitzer and his partners, however, don't care much about specific terms, as long as they and Wahconah Park are linked for the long haul.

In June, Elitzer and his partners, former Yankee pitcher Jim Bouton of Egremont, and New York City-based sports psychologist and minor league baseball and ice hockey team owner Eric

The park's use by minor league baseball teams over the years has been governed by licenses.

Margenau, announced that they would see a 30-year lease of Wahconah Park. They propose to purchase and play an independent league baseball team at Wahconah.

State law provides that municipalities cannot lease property for more than 10 years without a special act of the Legislature, Jeffrey Honig, Pittsfield's assistant city solicitor, said last week.

Honig also explained that the park's

use by minor league baseball teams over the years has been governed by licenses. Unlike a lease, which grants rights in a property, a license allows only certain uses and can be revoked at the will of the entity that grants it, Honig said.

Currently, it appears unlikely that any of the proponents of the three plans advanced so far for Wahconah Park's future would receive a long-term lease or license.

"A short-term license agreement is the best possible scenario at this time," said Thomas Murphy, director of the city's Department of Community Development. "It makes the most amount of sense."

Elitzer, whose partnership is the only one of the three proponents that maintains a long-term commitment to the park as a centerpiece of its plan, disagrees.

"What we want to do is assure that as long as we continue to do what we say we'll do, we keep the lease. ... It's a wonderfully self-policing provision," he said. "No one wants to lose money and run a cash deficit forever, so if we're not cash positive in any year — whether it's year

LEASE, continued on B4

Lease from B1

two or year 27 — we're not going to keep the lease. We don't much care whether it's a license or a lease, if it's cancelable at any time subject to our nonperformance, it really does come to the same thing. What's important is that we're offering to do what no one else is, which is to take on what is traditionally the landlord's responsibility, which is to assume responsibility for all maintenance, repairs and capital improvement."

Next month, all three proposals will be formally presented to the Park Commission, which will make a recommendation to Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr.

Also last week, Elitzer detailed his discussions with Miles Wolff, commissioner of the Northern League.

In a letter to Doyle dated July 15, Wolff wrote that he has "never spoken to these men on the possibility of purchasing a franchise. I would like to make this statement as clear as possible: The Northern League does not have at this time an expansion franchise for sale, nor am I aware of any franchise negotiating with this group. Furthermore, the sale of a franchise would need the approval of the Northern League board of directors. We would like to see [Jonathan Fleisig] and [Northern League franchise owner Robert Wirz] move into Pittsfield and would encourage the Bouton group or other local interests to work with these gentlemen, not against them, with regards to building a future for Northern League baseball in your community."

Fleisig, who is a commodities trader in New York City, owns a Northern League franchise, the Massachusetts Mad Dogs, which he proposes to reactivate and bring to Pittsfield to play in Wahconah Park.

In a telephone interview last week, Wolff said that he has had discussions with Margenau, and, later, Elitzer, but that they consisted largely of generalities concerning the possible availability of Northern League franchises.

"There was never any 'How do we get into the league?'" said Wolff.

In a memorandum addressed to The Eagle, Elitzer related his conversation with Wolff in which he said that Wolff gave him specific information.

"He confirmed to me that three of the nine franchises in the eastern division of the Northern League were inactive, but that one of them would probably not be worth negotiating with

because it looked like it would be going to a new stadium in Brockton," Elitzer wrote. "He said that, obviously, the league wouldn't want to issue any expansion franchises as long as existing franchises were looking for a home, but that our price negotiations with existing holders should recognize a 'floor' of \$500,000 because that was the price of an expansion franchise."

Wolff did not dispute Elitzer's account when it was read to him by a reporter.

Last week, Elitzer declared that he and his partners will continue to seek a long-term lease or renewable license for Wahconah Park. He also contended that city officials' willingness to enter into such an agreement will signal that support for a new stadium has dissipated to a point of near invisibility.

"The reason we want a long-term lease is that if we're going to be taking on an owner's responsibility, we need not to be worried that at the 10- or 15-year mark, the city will come in and say 'thanks for everything — goodbye.'"

Elitzer and his partners have charged that delays in decision-making about Wahconah Park's future are attributable to what Elitzer has termed "a cynical ploy to keep alive the dead horse of a new stadium."

Bossidy options a team, sees park without takings

By Bill Carey
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Lawrence A. Bossidy Jr. said yesterday that he has signed an agreement to purchase a minor league baseball team and will renew the effort to build a downtown stadium.

Bossidy said he is convinced the June 5 referendum that defeated the Pittsfield Civic Authority, which would have built and operated a stadium at West and Center streets, was not an indictment of the stadium itself.

"I'm going to try to reignite the effort that failed by virtue of the June vote," Bossidy said by telephone from his office in Morris Township, N.J. "I want the people to at least look at this again as an option. I do honestly believe in my heart of hearts that this is the right thing to do for Pittsfield."

A city native, Bossidy recently was called out of retirement to become chairman and CEO of Honeywell, a \$25 billion company, after its proposed merger with General Electric Co. failed.

Had exclusive agreement

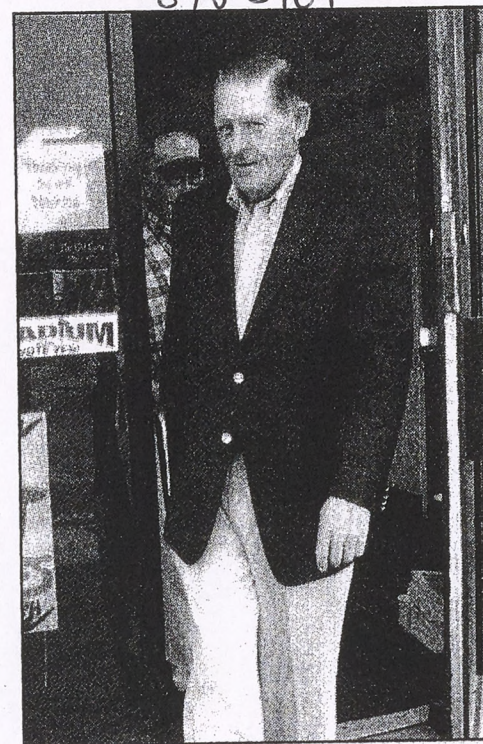
During 16 months of retirement, Bossidy reached an exclusive agreement with the city to purchase a minor league baseball team with the understanding that it would play in a new stadium in 2002. He approached a number of franchises in the Class A New York-Penn League, reportedly offering \$2.5 million or more for one team.

But he was unable to conclude a deal before the resounding defeat of the Civic Authority, which appeared to kill plans for the new stadium.

Bossidy said he signed an agreement yesterday giving him a 30-day purchase option for a New York-Penn League franchise, which he declined to identify.

The team would use city-owned Wahconah Park until a downtown stadium is built. The Pittsfield Astros, also a New York-Penn League franchise, are leaving for a new facility in Troy, N.Y., after the current season.

Bossidy said the situation has changed in several ways since the Civic Authority referendum; foremost is that he now has a team. He said he wants to relaunch the effort to



Pittsfield native and Honeywell CEO Lawrence Bossidy leaves the pro-stadium headquarters on June 5, the day of the special election that defeated a proposed Civic Authority.

build the stadium without the authority and without a feature that voters found particularly distasteful — the ability of the proposed authority to take land by eminent domain.

"The city has to find a way to run this now, without the Civic Authority," he said. "There has to be some other apparatus."

Bossidy said he is confident the funding model that was devised to pay for the new \$18 million stadium can be salvaged. That plan envisioned raising \$8.5 million in state grants, \$7 million in private and corporate contributions and \$3 million in revenue bonds

STADIUM, continued on A4

Stadium from A1

issued by the Civic Authority.

Nearly half of planned private contributions had already been pledged: \$2 million by MediaNews Group of Denver, parent company of The Berkshire Eagle, and \$1 million by Berkshire Bank. New England Newspapers Inc., a MediaNews Group holding, owns the 2.5-acre parcel at West and Center streets that was to serve as the cornerstone parcel of the stadium site.

Land not sold

Following voters' rejection of the Civic Authority, the parcel was offered for sale. Despite reports of a possible buyer — the CVS pharmacy chain is thought to be interested — the land remains unsold.

Bossidy said he has discussed reviving the stadium with MediaNews Group CEO William Dean Singleton, Berkshire Bank, Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. and City Council President Thomas E. Hickey Jr.

Singleton could not be reached late yesterday afternoon. In a July interview, he said MediaNews Group would still back a new stadium in Pittsfield, North Adams or South Berkshire County as long as it contributed to downtown economic development.

"Dean Singleton wants to build a park in Pittsfield or at least Berkshire County, but he would prefer Pittsfield," Bossidy said of their discussion.

"We're encouraged by Mr. Bossidy's tenacity with regard to keeping New York-Penn League baseball in Pittsfield," said Curt Preisser, Doyle's spokesman.

"The mayor has believed for a very long time that a new facility is needed for Pittsfield," but he learned from the June 5 vote that the plan must be recrafted, Preisser said.

Bossidy's re-emergence could spell doom for two entities proposing to establish independent league franchises at Wahconah

The mayor plans to send a letter to the parks board asking it to delay any decision on a park license. 8/3/01

Park after the Astros leave. The New York-Penn League has described the aging park as inadequate, but Bossidy believes he would be allowed to play there while a new stadium rises.

"I think they'll let me play in Wahconah Park next season, maybe for two seasons, but only on the premise that a new stadium is built," he said.

Former Yankee pitcher and "Ball Four" author Jim Bouton, who leads one of the two entities vying to bring independent baseball to Wahconah, said the effort of his group remains unchanged. Addressing a public meeting last night at City Hall, he said: "All that has happened is we possibly have a more formidable opponent."

Bouton's group, which includes Eric Margenau and Donald B. "Chip" Elitzer, arranged the televised meeting at City Hall to evoke public comment on the competing baseball proposals. The Parks Commission has said it will recommend a plan for Wahconah Park next Monday.

But Preisser said the mayor will dispatch a letter to the commission today asking it to delay any decision on issuing a park license for the 2002 season.

It is common knowledge that Pittsfield can support only one professional baseball team. But "in no way, shape or form is Mayor Doyle abandoning Wahconah Park, whatever happens," Preisser said.

Bill Carey can be reached via e-mail at bcarey@berkshireeagle.com.

Baseball plans battle for support

The City of Pittsfield has diamond decisions to make.

Who, if anyone, will play professional baseball at Wahconah Park next season? And should Wahconah be the long-term focus for local professional ball, or is a new stadium somehow still a possibility?

The baseball battle heated up this week, with the owner of Northern League team publicly setting his sights on Wahconah Park—at least until a new stadium is available. And a Berkshire-based partnership is making the case for a long-term lease and upgrades to Wahconah Park.

Jonathan Fleisig, owner of the dormant Massachusetts Mad Dogs Northern League franchise met with Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. this week—and apparently got a warm reception.

Fleisig hopes to field his Northern League team—which has been homeless since the end of the 1999 season, when a stadium in Lynn was deemed unsuitable—at Wahconah beginning with the 2002 season and at a new stadium down the road.

“Wahconah Park has a great tradition of professional baseball,” Fleisig said. “I know the mayor, the city council, the parks commission and I would like to see that tradition continue.”

Fleisig also has the support of Northern League commissioner Miles Wolff, who penned a letter to Doyle touting Fleisig’s and co-owner Bob Wirz’s attributes.

“These men have outstanding credentials and would easily win approval for a move to Pittsfield,” Wolff stated. “These are the only men that are under consideration for ownership of a Northern League franchise in Pittsfield.”

7/26/01 BASEBALL page 9

Baseball proposals may be formally evaluated

continued from page 1

Wolff also took a shot at the Jim Bouton, Chip Elitzer, Eric Margeneau partnership, which is seeking a long-term lease to field pro ball at Wahconah Park. The partnership has mentioned purchasing either a Northern or Atlantic league team to play in Pittsfield.

Wolff distanced himself from that possibility. “I have never spoken with these men on the possibility of purchasing a franchise,” he stated. “I would like to make this statement as clear as possible, the Northern League does not have at this time an expansion franchise for sale, nor am I aware of any franchise negotiating with this group. We would like to see Jonathan or Bob move into Pittsfield and would encourage the Bouton group or other local interests to work with these gentlemen, not against them, with regards to building a future for Northern League baseball in your community.”

Wolff’s letter, however, highlighted a major difference between the Fleisig proposal and the Bouton partnership’s.

Bouton and his partners believe that Wahconah Park, with ongoing improvements, could be a viable, and attractive professional baseball venue into the future.

Wolff believes Wahconah is suitable only on a temporary basis.

“For the long-term success of professional baseball in Pittsfield, we all believe a new stadium is necessary in the future,” Wolff stated. “However, in the short term, the Northern League can operate in Wahconah Park until plans for a new facility are finalized.”

Doyle, who, despite the thumping voters recently gave to a new stadium plan and governing civic authority, retains hope that a new stadium can be built. The mayor appeared energized by Fleisig’s interest.

“I was very encouraged by what Mr. Fleisig had to say about his ball club and his desire to explore the option of moving to Pittsfield,” the mayor said. “Mr. Fleisig brings to the table an established ball club, an impressive resume of ownership in minor leagues sports and a strong financial background. We will evaluate his detailed and complete proposal along with any others we may receive.”

Bouton responded this week by calling for a comparison of both proposals. He believes that his group holds the stronger hand on several fronts.

For one thing, Bouton said, Fleisig’s proposal offers no long-term commitment to Pittsfield. If, in several years, a new stadium is not built in Pittsfield, the team could simply move to another, more accommodating, location.

“The meaning is clear,” Bouton says. “If the citizens of Pittsfield don’t eventually build a new baseball stadium, then Mr. Fleisig ... will take his team to a town that will. If the new stadium is built nearby, Pittsfield will have lost not only its treasured Wahconah Park ... but also its century-long monopoly on professional baseball in the Berkshires.”

Bouton added that his partnership is willing to make an ongoing financial commitment to improving Wahconah Park. The long-term lease would be “performance based” and could be voided if the partnership did not fulfill its commitment.

While Bouton believes that his proposal is supported by a “vast majority of Pittsfield citizens” he is troubled that it has not received a fair hearing before officials. The parks commission, in fact, cancelled a scheduled meeting despite pleas from Bouton and Elitzer to review the plan.

“This most recent move [the Fleisig proposal] does not come as a surprise to my partners and me,” Bouton said. “We knew something was up when the board of park commissioners canceled its July 9 and 23rd meetings, when the mayor refused to return our calls, and when the parks commission chairman responded to our written proposal with a newspaper quote that there is ‘no urgency’ on Wahconah Park.”

The sluggish response from City Hall appears to be perplexing others as well. The Chamber of Commerce of the Berkshires this week issued a letter to the parks commission calling for prompt review of all proposals dealing with professional baseball.

“The chamber understands there are several proposals currently under consideration,” said chamber president David Colby. “One thing seems consistent throughout these proposals—that is the important economic impact and quality of life benefits of professional baseball in our community.”

Colby also suggested that the parks commission take the lead in moving the process forward. “This is an issue the local business community feels very strongly about,” he said, “and the chamber hopes the commission will play an active role in the ongoing search for the best possible solution available to keep baseball alive and well in Berkshire County for many years to come.”

The parks commission has tentatively scheduled an August 13 meeting at City Hall.

City council president Tom Hickey also expressed frustration regarding the behind-the-scenes baseball bargaining. Hickey on Wednesday received unanimous council approval (with Dan Bianchi absent) asking Doyle to begin a formal request for proposal process regarding professional baseball in Pittsfield.

Hickey said the process “will be anyone who wants to put in a proposal.”

“What I’m trying to do is put an end to doing this on the front pages of the Berkshire Eagle,” he said.

Candidate rips board over plan for baseball

PITTSFIELD — Mayoral candidate Henry J. Hebert has blasted the city’s Parks Commission, accusing the panel of delaying a decision concerning Wahconah Park in a “conscious effort” to derail a South County partnership’s proposal to bring an independent baseball team to the park next season.

Campaign Brief

Hebert said that he supports the plan advanced by Jim Bouton, “Chip” Elitzer and Eric Margeneau and contended that Parks Commission Chairman Clifford J. Nilan treated the partners in a “heavy-handed” manner during a recent meeting.

Nilan’s actions, Hebert said in a prepared statement, “exemplify the fact that Nilan is a patsy for the Doyle administration, The Berkshire Eagle and Berkshire Bank.”

Hebert referred to the main proponents of a Pittsfield Civic Authority, which would have built, owned and operated a multi-use facility off Center Street in Pittsfield. In a binding referendum on June 5, Pittsfield voters nullified the City Council’s decision to establish the authority.

Nilan denied Hebert’s charges. He said that the commission delayed a decision to give Lawrence A. Bossidy, a Pittsfield native and former chairman and chief executive officer of Allied Signal Corp., an opportunity to streamline his proposal to bring to Pittsfield a major league-affiliated baseball team on which he has a purchase option.

We voted to give Mr. Bossidy time to get his proposal in,” Nilan said. “The commission is definitely acting in the best interest of the park system and Wahconah Park.”

Doyle, Fleisig sign agreement for baseball team at Wahconah Park

Minor league baseball will return to Wahconah Park on May 24 when a new Northern League team plays its first game in Pittsfield.

On Monday, Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. and franchise owner Jonathan Fleisig signed a two-year license agreement giving Fleisig the right to field a team at the site.

“This is another great event for Pittsfield and Berkshire County,” said Doyle.

“It’s been 18 months since I started trying to get here,” said Fleisig. “It’s nice to be part of the community.”

The signing took place during a public event at the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

Fleisig and his general manager, Mike Kardamis, used the event to announce a contest to name the team.

When the franchise last fielded a team two years ago, it was based in Lynn and called the Massachusetts Mad Dogs.

Kardamis said that the “name the team contest” provides an opportunity to involve the community. The team is sponsoring the contest in conjunction with The Berkshire Eagle and WUPE radio.

In addition, the team is encouraging entrants to donate \$5 to Girls Incorporated. The team will match the first \$1,500 of donations and provide donors with complimentary tickets to a May game.

Six names have been proposed: Pittsfield Pikes; Pittsfield Power; Pittsfield Mad Dogs; Berkshire Black Bears; Berkshire Boomers; and Berkshire Blast.

A selection will be made early in January, said Kardamis.

The team will play a 90-game schedule against other teams in the nonaffiliated, independent league. Half the games will take place at



Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. and Jonathan Fleisig on Monday formally signed a two-year license agreement allowing Fleisig to field an independent minor league baseball team at Wahconah Park.

Wahconah Park.

Doyle commended Fleisig for his efforts and praised members of the parks commission, who recommended Fleisig’s plan over an option proposed by a local group led by Jim Bouton and Chip Elitzer.

“They did an outstanding job of getting the facts,” the mayor said of the parks commissioners.

Doyle termed the resulting partnership with Fleisig “the best possible option for the City of Pittsfield.”

Referencing the new stadium battle, the civic authority and the departure of the Pittsfield Astros, Doyle said it’s time to move forward.

“We’ve been through some rough times,” he said, “but we’re going to have baseball and we’re all going to have

fun.”

Fleisig said he is excited “to be part of this community ... there were a lot of people for me.”

The team owner—who also operates a minor league hockey team in California—termed Pittsfield “beautiful.” He lauded the winter scenery on Monday, adding that “the only [time] that’s going to be better is Opening Day.”

Fleisig said that Doyle negotiated a tough license agreement and he looks forward to “the chance to prove” that he deserves the support.

The license agreement calls for a \$75,000 annual payment from the franchise to the city, with the amount waived if the club spends that much in improvements and day-to-day maintenance of the park. During the season, the team will be responsible for non-structural repairs; the city remains responsible for structural repairs.

The text of the license agreement is posted at www.pittsfieldgazette.com

While the team doesn’t have a name yet, it does have a web site: www.pittsfieldbaseball.com

The Wahconah alternative



Under the Bouton-Elitzer plan, the concession area at Wahconah Park would feature a 'Taste of the Berkshires' food court, 'Shops of the Berkshires' booths, an enlarged plaza and an archway entrance.

Bouton, Elitzer 'not going away'

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The re-emergence of Lawrence A. Bossidy into the debate over the future of professional baseball in Pittsfield won't affect the plans of a South Berkshire-based partnership to bring an independent league team to Wahconah Park for an indefinite run.

"We're not going away," said Donald B. "Chip" Elitzer of Great Barrington, a principal of a partner-

ship that includes former New York Yankee Jim Bouton of Egremont and Eric Margenau of New York City. "We've been speculating all summer that the final 'surprise' would be the reappearance of Larry Bossidy."

Elitzer made his comments prior to the opening of a public meeting that the partnership sponsored in City Hall last night. The meeting, which the partners billed as an opportunity for citizens to share their

opinions about Wahconah Park's future, was attended by about 20 people, a half-dozen of whom rose to ask questions or to make comments.

James J. Hassett rose to declare that while he admires the partners' presentation and their skill at getting "free television time," he favors the retention of a major league-affiliated baseball team in the city;

WAHCONAH, continued on A4



Donald B. 'Chip' Elitzer, left, and Jim Bouton, who want to field a baseball team at Wahconah Park, organized last night's public meeting at City Hall. The meeting was billed as an opportunity for citizens to express their views on the future of the park.

Wahconah from A1

other speakers either praised the partners' proposal or — as in the case of James Conant, a member of the Parks Commission — asked questions.

The Bouton-Elitzer-Margenau plan to bring baseball to Wahconah next summer, said Sandra Hurkowitz of Pittsfield, is "visionary." Hurkowitz characterized a competing proposal advanced by Jonathan Fleisig, who aims to locate his now-dormant Northern League franchise at Wahconah Park, as "business as usual and the city cannot afford business as usual."

One of Conant's questions was how, in view of the partners' aim to increase attendance at home games to upwards of 4,000, they plan to provide enough parking.

Elitzer replied that much of the property at the park that could be used for parking is not currently used for that purpose. He said the partners would seek waivers of environmental regulations that would allow them to place a layer of crushed stone over the entire parking surface.

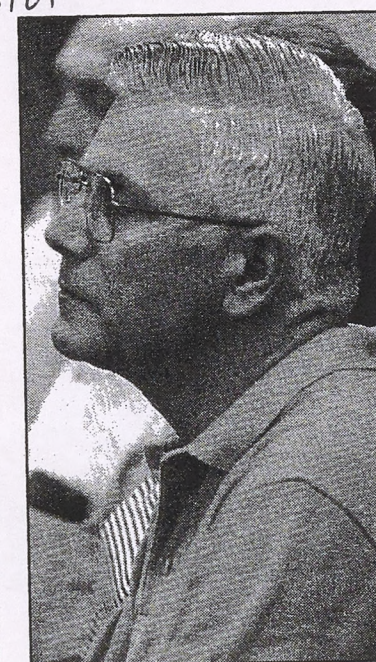
Observing that the Parks Commission has delayed making a

In pushing for a new stadium, Potts declared, 'the mayor and his appointees will once again ignore the wishes of the voters.'

decision about which proposal for Wahconah Park it will endorse, mayoral candidate David Potts suggested, that Bossidy's announcement was the reason for the delay.

"This all hinges on building a new stadium," he said. "... The mayor and his appointees will once again ignore the wishes of the voters."

On June 5, a grass-roots campaign led by Potts and two other Pittsfield residents prevailed at the polls when voters defeated a proposal to establish a Civic Authority that would have built, owned and operated a multi-use stadium downtown.



Mayoral candidate David Potts listens at last night's meeting.

Bouton agreed.

"It's the new stadium issue all over again," he said. "Maybe it

will have to be defeated again, and the best way to defeat it is to go with our proposal."

Citing short notice and scheduling conflicts, Fleisig did not attend last night's meeting, the conclusion of which featured a telephone poll that pitted his proposal against the partnership's.

Viewers of the meeting, which was moderated by City Councilor Daniel L. Bianchi of Ward 6, were invited to call one of two toll-free numbers to register their preference.

After a false start caused by technical difficulties with the telephone banks situated just outside of Minneapolis, the polling firm retained by the partners reported what Bouton noted was an "unofficial" result: 151 callers in favor of the partnership's proposal; 122 in favor of Fleisig's.

Elitzer called The Eagle later to say that the polling company also recorded attempts to reach the lines, but those figures were not available last night.

D.R. Bahlman can be reached via e-mail at dbahlman@berkshireeagle.com.

Wahconah decision put off until October

The next tenant at Wahconah Park won't be decided until October 5.

During a sometimes testy meeting on Monday, the parks commission voted unanimously to delay a decision on professional baseball another six weeks.

Jim Bouton and Donald Elitzer — who have been aggressively campaigning for the right to field a team at the city-owned facility and mount a private rehabilitation program — asked commissioners to stick to their original schedule which called for a decision this month.

But commissioners — along with community development director Tom Murphy — said that Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. requested the delay.

In addition to the south county-based Bouton-Elitzer group, Jonathan Fleisig of New York has expressed interest in Wahconah.

And last week Pittsfield native Larry Bossidy announced that he had obtained a 30-day option to purchase a baseball team that he'd like to field at Wahconah for a year or two prior to moving to a proposed new stadium at

the corner of West and Center streets.

"The recent turn of events with Pittsfield's native son changes things," said Murphy. "We request that you put your decision on hold."

Murphy said the October 5 date creates "a nice time zone for whoever is awarded a team."

Murphy said that Bossidy is preparing information similar to that submitted by other applicants, who made presentations to the commission on August 13.

Bouton and Elitzer argued that they have followed the commission's timetable and that the additional delay threatens their venture.

"It does disadvantage us," said Elitzer. "We have had our proposal publicly on the table since June 13."

Bouton read a prepared statement asking the commission to "abide by its original intent and render a decision tonight."

Bouton said that chairman Cliff Nilan announced previously that the decision would be made August 20; that decision was postponed until this week.



Parks commissioners Bob Smith, Cliff Nilan and Tony Massimiano listened as Jim Bouton asked them to stick to their timeline and award Wahconah Park rights to a baseball group this month. The commission instead put off its decision until October 5.

Bouton said his group has pledged to invest millions of private dollars over time into Wahconah Park, freeing up city funds for other uses.

"Even if Pittsfield were financially solvent, why should it spurn the offer to be relieved of a major financial burden, when funds could thereby be freed up for other uses such as schools, public safety and

streetlights?" But commissioners said their obligation is to complete due diligence on all options.

Nilan, who twice directed curt comments toward Elitzer when the applicant requested permission to speak, said he hopes both the Bouton

and Elitzer groups can be heard on this matter. See BASEBALL page 17

AT-LARGE COUNCIL CANDIDATES • PAGES 26-27

Baseball decision won't be made until October

continued from page 1

group and Fleisig keep their plans on the table.

"They're two good proposals," said Nilan.

But he said the commission should heed the mayor's request and wait for Bossidy to make a proposal.

Commissioner James Conant said Bouton's group has done a good job but "we must hear what [Bossidy's] proposal is."

Commissioner Sue Colker, who has read the plans but did not attend the meeting when the Bouton and Fleisig proposals were presented, agreed: "I feel obligated to hear the other proposal."

Robert Smith commended Bouton and Elitzer "for a tremendous amount of hard work" but said "based on what's on the table now, it's a tough decision."

The fifth commissioner, Tony Massimiano, moved that the commission hold off until October 5 on any decision.

Bouton and Elitzer left the meeting disappointed, but said they remain committed to their plan.

On Tuesday, Bouton issued an "open letter" to Nilan lamenting the commission chairman's "shamefully rude and unwarranted" attitude toward Elitzer at the meeting.

Wrote Bouton: "This continues a pattern of rudeness on your part that goes all the way back to the introduction of our proposal on June 11. It includes your refusal to return any of our phone calls or respond to any of our letters, your ignoring our requests for a public hearing on the matter, and your thinly veiled hostility whenever either one of us is speaking before the board."

Bouton and Elitzer on Wednesday also issued a formal challenge to Bossidy and Fleisig to participate in a televised debate about the various Wahconah options, to be followed by a phone-in vote during which residents could select their preference.

"We will leave the field if we lose the vote," said Bouton.

Fleisig promptly declined, saying an unscientific poll isn't meaningful and that the issue should be left to the commission and mayor.

Fleisig also noted that unlike Bouton & Elitzer who plan to purchase a team, he already owns an independent league team — one of the standards set by Nilan.

Meanwhile, county treasurer Peter Arlos also addressed the commission on Monday, saying Wahconah Park is a valuable community asset.

Arlos argued that the two finalists in the mayoral field should be consulted immediately after the primary for their views. The appointed members of the parks commission should yield, he said.

"Of five [commissioners] four are holdovers," said Arlos. "You have a lame duck mayor and a lame duck city council when this is a future decision."

Arlos has submitted a formal petition to the city council suggesting that body instruct the parks commission to hold a public hearing the day after the primary.

"The 30-day option of Larry Bossidy will have expired on September 21 and the input of the two nominees for mayor will be obtained, since they will be responsible for future policy," writes Arlos. "Until now, the public has not been given the opportunity by officials to be heard on this matter."

8/30/01

Elitzer says Parks board was 'looking for excuses'

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Jonathan Fleisig said yesterday he was "thrilled" to learn that the Parks Department on Thursday night had unanimously recommended that the city grant a license to allow his Northern League franchise to play in Wahconah Park the next two years.

"This is the best news that has happened to me in the last month," said Fleisig, a New York City commodities trader who lost several friends in last month's terrorist attacks.

The Parks Commission's recommendation will go to Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. for the final approval.

The commission's decision to back Fleisig understandably drew the opposite reaction from former New York Yankee Jim Bouton of North Egremont and Donald B. "Chip" Elitzer of Great Bar-

rington, who, along with part-time Stockbridge resident Eric Margenau, had also proposed putting an independent league team in Wahconah Park next year.

"Are we disappointed? Of course," said Bouton, who did not attend Thursday night's meeting because of a prior speaking commitment. "We've had our hearts in this for a very long time."

'Naive to be surprised'

Elitzer, who did attend the hearing, said he was both disappointed and surprised.

"But I suppose it was a bit naive of me to be surprised," he said.

Both Bouton and Elitzer have been critical of the city's selection process since they came forward with their proposal in June after voters defeated the creation of the Civic Authority that would have built and operated a new downtown stadium.

Unlike Fleisig, the South County partnership had sought an exclusive 20- to 30-year lease, renewable every two years at its option, to use aging Wahconah Park.

But the five parks commissioners Thursday night appeared reluctant to grant any group a long-term exclusive license at Wahconah Park.

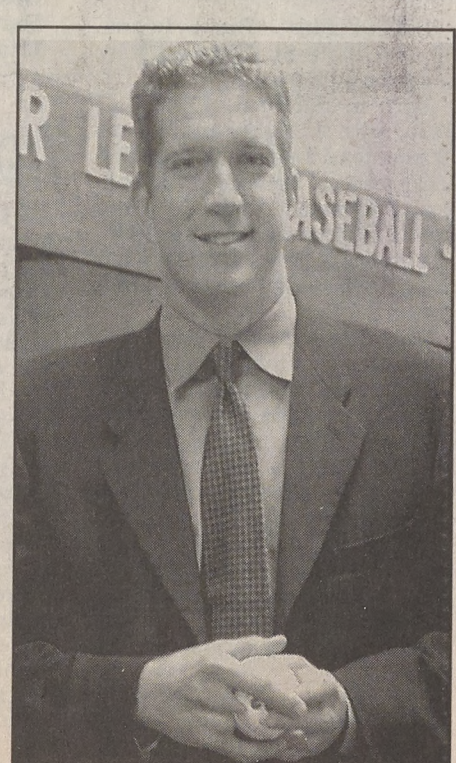
Elitzer said yesterday that everything the South County partnership had proposed was negotiable, and charged that the Parks Commission was looking for "excuses" to turn down their proposal.

"This was just a gross and willful misrepresentation of what we've been saying all along," Elitzer said. "I think they were looking for excuses, not express reasons, to make their decision."

Bouton said the partners planned to make further comment either through an

BASEBALL, continued on B4

Saturday, October 6, 2001



Jonathan Fleisig
Mad Dogs owner

Baseball from B1

opinion piece sent to newspapers, a letter to the editor or on a Web site.

The South County group's proposal was more comprehensive than Fleisig's and had attracted more public support at city meetings.

But the commission said Thursday night that the South County proposal had met only two of its eight criteria. The South County group also does not own a team and has never received the backing of a league to obtain one.

Fleisig, on the other hand, owned a team from the outset and also received the backing of Northern League President Miles Wolff.

'Boomer' back in Pittsfield

Fleisig's team, known as the Massachusetts Mad Dogs when it played in Lynn, has been dormant for two years.

Yesterday, Fleisig said he would hold a contest in Pittsfield to rename his team, and that former Boston Red Sox star George "Boomer" Scott would be the club's manager.

Scott, who managed the Mad Dogs in Lynn, played minor league baseball in Pittsfield for a Red Sox affiliate in the early 1960s. He is expected to make a personal appearance in Pittsfield next week, Fleisig said.

Fleisig also said he plans to move to the area and would like to

hire a staff of Berkshire County natives. "The key to everything is working with the community," he said.

He also pledged that he will not threaten to move his team if a new stadium is not built in the future, as opponents of his proposal had charged.

"I made a deal, I gave my word, and I meant it that we are going to put a club in Wahconah Park. We're going to do it the best we can," Fleisig said.

"Do I think playing in a new stadium is great? Sure, it's a great idea. But for the people who read this, I'm here for Wahconah Park."

The South County partnership said its main interest was staying at Wahconah Park, which it used as one of its selling points for having an exclusive long-term lease.

Bouton, who turned the baseball establishment upside-down 30 years ago when he wrote "Ball Four," said that playing in historic Wahconah Park is what intrigued him and his partners.

"This had nothing to do with Chip and I being baseball team owners," Bouton said. "I've had the opportunity to be a minor partner in baseball teams before. That's not my interest. Our whole interest was Wahconah Park."

"We wanted to operate Wahconah Park and have the city empower us to get the best deal for the city," he said. "This would have been an unprecedented deal, where the city would dictate to a team."

"I liked the idea of standing that [concept] on its head," Bouton said. "Wahconah Park, I thought, was worth doing it for."

Tony Dobrowolski can be reached at tdobrowolski@berkshireeagle.com.

10/6/01

City to get new park for soccer, Little League

By Bill Carey
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — While the city tries to reconcile its vision for professional baseball, plans are taking shape to build a new Little League and soccer park on General Electric property at the corner of East and Newell streets.

Thomas E. Hickey Jr., executive director of the Pittsfield Economic Development Authority (PEDA), said plans for the park should be firmed up in the next month, after which preliminary site work will begin. The job of grading the site and constructing the fields is expected to be completed next summer.

GE, which will continue to own the land, has agreed to do the work under a Definitive Economic Development Agreement (DEDA) with the city. Under that same agreement, PEDA is developing a 52-acre parcel northwest of the park site for light industrial uses.

The DEDA took effect with the signing of the PCB cleanup agreement between GE and the city, state and federal governments in October 2000.

"As part of the [PCB] settlement, we thought ... everybody's involved with it, we ought to have something that people could use," said Hickey, who took part in the negotiations as City Council president.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency, which is overseeing the GE site remediation, "is thoroughly behind us having this youth complex," he said. "They think it's a great idea."

Two conceptual designs are being considered for the triangular, 3.5-acre park site, of which about 2.25 acres are available for the playing surfaces.

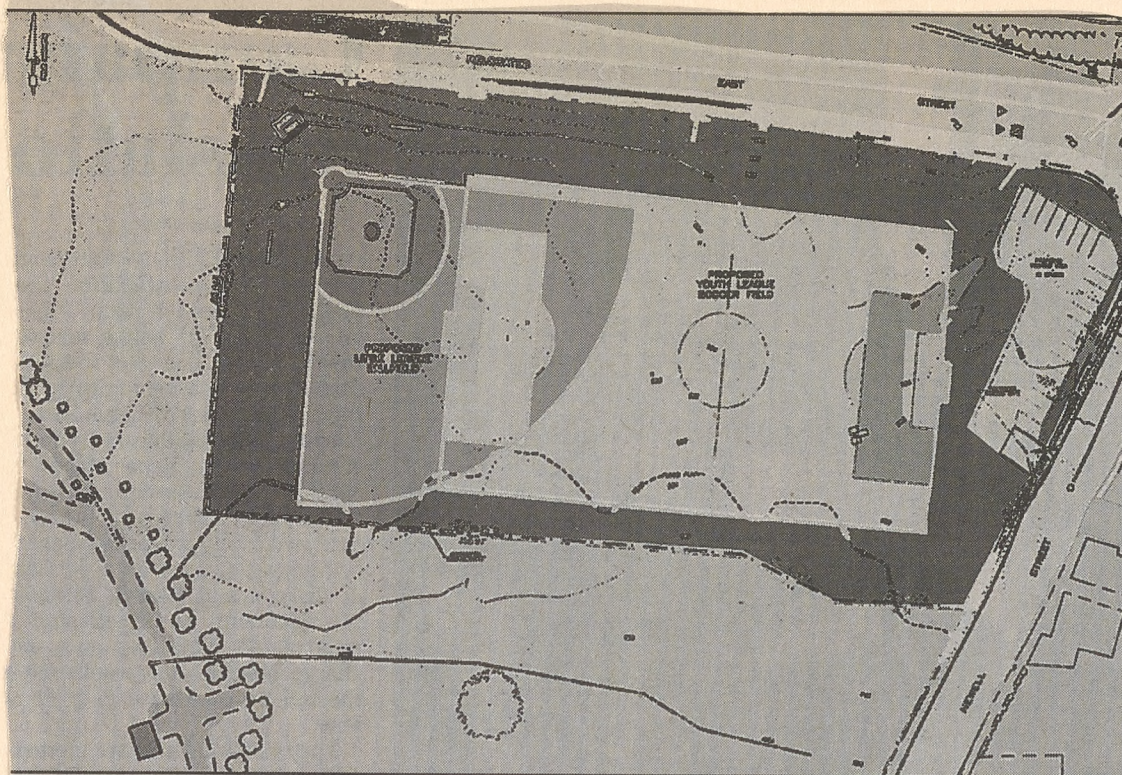
The favored option places the baseball diamond in either the northwest or the southwest corner of the site, with home plate facing in an easterly direction toward Newell Street. The sun would set behind batters during evening games.

The Little League field will have a removable perimeter fence, allowing space for a regulation-size soccer field, Hickey

The park, which will be lighted for night games, will serve as the cornerstone of an area that will look much different in the future.

PARK, continued on A4

lay, September 1, 2001



he baseball diamond would be placed in either the northwest or southwest corner of the site, which is bounded by East Street to the north (at top) and Newell Street to the east (at right). The ballfield would have a removable perimeter fence, to allow for a regulation-size soccer field.

Park from A1

said. The park will be lighted for night games, and parking for about 20 cars will be provided on the Newell Street side. The entrance will be from Newell Street.

Once completed, the park will serve as the cornerstone of an area that will look much different

in the future. Under the PCB cleanup agreement, land lying west of the park will be cleared of buildings and landscaped. This parcel is bounded to the north by East Street and to the south by the Housatonic River. Two wastewater treatment buildings and a helicopter pad fronting on East Street will be left intact.

The park site has been mentioned as a possible location for a

new stadium, if one is to be built for professional baseball. A look at the conceptual drawings reveals that such a facility would be a tight squeeze at best. But there is no need to argue the point; the DEDA does not allow for a minor league stadium, Hickey said.

Bill Carey can be reached via e-mail at bcarey@berkshireeagle.com.

Arlos wants baseball hearing

PITTSFIELD — Peter G. Arlos has called upon the City Council to ask the Parks Commission to hold a public hearing Sept. 26 concerning the various proposals for baseball at Wahconah Park.

Arlos, who is running for an at-large seat on the City Council, noted that Lawrence A. Bossidy's 30-day option on a minor league baseball team will have expired on Sept. 21, and the results of the Sept. 25 preliminary election will be known.

"The input of the two nominees for mayor will be able to be obtained, since they will be responsible for future policy," Arlos wrote in a prepared statement. "Until now, the public has not been given the opportunity to be heard on this matter."

9/20/01

Baseball from B1

their petition will be presented to the council during Tuesday night's meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the council chambers.

The petition has earned the support of one of the five Park Commissioners, James Conant, who is also a candidate for the Ward 4 council seat. Conant said yesterday that while he supports placing a referendum question on the November ballot, he still believes the Park Commission needs to make a decision soon.

"As a park commissioner, I certainly want to get citizens' input. For the Bossidy proposal, I wish we could meet tomorrow and hear it out, hear what it says. But very clearly, if we wait for this [ballot] initiative to take place in November, the Bouton group will be out; they have indicated to me

that they just can't wait," Conant said.

He added that there are still a vast number of unanswered questions surrounding all three proposals.

Peter Arlos, a candidate for councilor at large, said he signed the petition because he wants to make the voters a part of the process and "dispel their fears. They have never been part of the process and the way the Park Commission has handled this situation has poisoned the well."

In addition to Lothrop, Jones, Conant and Arlos, the others to sign the petition are: candidates for mayor Anthony Andrews, Edward J. Baptiste, Eric S. Biss, Henry Hebert and David Potts; candidates for councilor at large Peter Marchetti and Anthony Maffuccio; Ward 1 candidates Jody Miner and Rob Tuttle; Ward 2 candidates James Arpante and Don Ostrikas; Ward 3 candidate Anthony Litano and Ward 4 candidate Terry Kinna.

Jack Dew can be reached via e-

Community Notes / B6

Friday, September 7, 2001

Candidate pushes for vote on baseball plans

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The November ballot could see yet another referendum on baseball if a petition by a candidate for councilor at large wins the support of the current City Council members at next week's meeting.

Jonathan Lothrop, a candidate for councilor at large, will submit a petition to the City Council on Tuesday evening, asking that a nonbinding question be placed on

the ballot allowing the voters to pick one of three proposals to put professional baseball in the city.

This comes on the heels of the June 5 special election in which voters rejected the proposed Pittsfield Civic Authority, which would have built and operated a downtown stadium and played host to a minor league baseball team.

Since that defeat, three plans have emerged to keep minor league baseball in the city. The Pittsfield Astros, a New York-

Penn League team and the current tenant of Wahconah Park, will leave Pittsfield at the end of the season to play in a new stadium in Troy, N.Y.

3 choices for voters

Lothrop's petition would ask the voters to choose among three plans: a proposal submitted by a three-man partnership, led by former major-leaguer Jim Bouton, that would put an independent league team in Wahconah Park and shut the door on the possibil-

ity of a new stadium; a proposal by Jonathan Fleisig, the current owner of a dormant independent league team, to move his team to Wahconah but leave open the possibility of a new stadium; and a proposal by Lawrence A. Bossidy, a Pittsfield native son and the current CEO of Honeywell Inc., to keep a major league-affiliated New York-Penn League team in Pittsfield that would temporarily play in Wahconah Park and then relocate to a new stadium.

All three plans are currently

being weighed by the city Park Commission, which has indicated it will make its choice on Oct. 5. Lothrop said in an interview yesterday that such a decision would lack legitimacy among city voters and perpetuate an ugly debate that has raged in the city for the past year and a half.

"My fear is that, whatever the Park Commission decides, it will not be the last word, and we will continue squabbling over this issue and will end up with nothing," Lothrop said.

In order for the question to be placed on the ballot, a majority of the 11 city councilors must support it and submit it to City Clerk Jody Phillips by Oct. 2.

17 candidates sign petition

Lothrop and Richard A. Jones Jr., another candidate for councilor at large, have contacted each of the city's candidates for political office and asked them to sign on to support the petition. Seventeen candidates have done so, and

BASEBALL, continued on B4

College league promises club in N. Adams

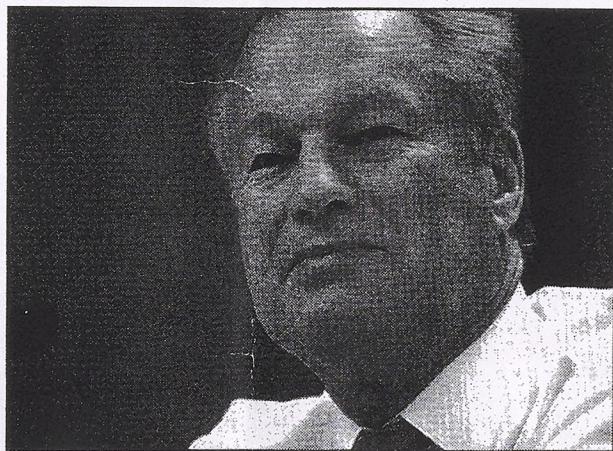
Bouton blasts parks board

By Bill Carey
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The South County partnership seeking to lease Wahconah Park for an independent league baseball team is trying for the second time to arrange a public debate with its competition.

The partnership of Jim Bouton, Donald B. "Chip" Elitzer and Eric Margenau yesterday issued the debate challenge, calling on Lawrence A. Bossidy Jr. and Jonathan Fleisig, who are pro-

BOUTON, continued on B6



Ben Garver
Jim Bouton and his partners have challenged the other baseball groups to a debate.

By Glenn Drohan
Berkshire Eagle Staff

NORTH ADAMS — The commissioner of the New England Collegiate Baseball League yesterday praised the city's baseball facilities at the Noel Field Athletic Complex and said he had no doubt a franchise will come here next summer.

Commissioner Thomas Hutton said the league's board of directors will probably meet within three weeks to approve the city franchise.

"I think it will be a clear and resounding endorsement for the city of North Adams to come on board," Hutton said.

He said he knew the city had something special when James Ryan, a member of the league's expansion committee, called him

several weeks ago after visiting Joe Wolfe Field at the complex.

"He said, 'You've just got to come up and see this field. You wouldn't believe it.' I'd never been to North Adams before, but I came on out and he was right," Hutton said. "I walked around the field and all I could say was, 'Wow! Wow.' Everywhere I looked there were beautiful vistas and mountains. I thought I had seen every beautiful field there was to see, but I'd missed this one."

Hutton said he thinks the city will welcome the collegiate league because the teams play at a competitive level and its players become part of the communities in which they play. He said the franchise will probably ask local families to host players, as is done in other communities. The other option would be to lease dormito-

ry space at a college, such as the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

An owner for the potential North Adams franchise has not yet been chosen, although Hutton said he was talking with one interested party. Ryan, who formed a limited partnership to create a team in the league, will not be the owner because he is committed to bringing a franchise to Vermont, possibly in Montpelier, Hutton said.

A local owner could come forward, he said, but the start-up cost for a franchise would be a stumbling block.

"The owner has to underwrite what the cost would be if there were to be no fund-raising. That would be probably \$60,000 to \$70,000, easily. We have to raise

BASEBALL, continued on B6

B6 — The Berkshire Eagle, Thursday, August 30, 2001

The Berkshires

Baseball from B1

that money, quite frankly, and we're not going to do it by gouging people at the gate," he said. "We look to local businesses who believe in what we're doing and that it is important to the community. I have a feeling North Adams is going to step up to the plate."

Mayor John Barrett III, who confirmed Tuesday that the collegiate league was interested in North Adams after dropping out of consideration to play in Pittsfield, said he has talked to a couple of local people who might be interested in becoming part-owners of the team.

"There are some people already interested, so I think there will be a local connection," Barrett said.

He added that rumors circulating that the Noel Field tennis courts will be torn up to make way for the new team are completely false. In fact, he said, the city plans to refurbish the tennis courts and the basketball court within the next two years and possibly add a basketball court to the complex.

"The field's all set the way it is. The only thing we'll have to do is set up a new entrance," he said.

The local team would play 20 home games here from mid-June to early August in its 40-game schedule, with season tickets priced at \$35.

Local baseball coaches said the arrival of the 10-team league here will be wonderful for the city.

"It's absolutely outstanding," said Thomas McGrath, longtime Drury High School coach. "I don't think there will be any problem with attendance. It's excellent baseball, excellent baseball. And by having kids live in the community, the families will get involved in the team."

McGrath's son, Sean, a Drury shortstop, played for the league's Danbury, Conn., team for one full season and part of another before being drafted by the New York Mets system in 1997.

Sean McGrath, who recently retired from baseball to take a job as an administrator at Pine Cobble School in Williamstown, said the level of play in the collegiate league has dramatically improved over the years.

"It's very competitive, Division 1 [college] baseball," he said. "The top players come from Division 1 teams across the country. Now, with the league expanding and becoming very competitive, more coaches are sending their top players there, rather than just to the Cape Cod League."

Thomas Tom LoRicco, MCLA baseball coach, said he was familiar with the collegiate league because local players have been part of it. Jose Diaz, a catcher and designated hitter who graduated

this year, played on a Rhode Island team, and Joseph Bate-man, an MCLA pitcher who will graduate this year, also played in Rhode Island before moving on to the Cape Cod League last season.

LoRicco said the new team will present a great opportunity for local players at both MCLA and Williams to compete, if they can play up to the level required.

"A lot of kids get drafted out of this league, and I think it's going to draw a lot of people into the community," he said. "We may have some kids in Berkshire County, quality athletes, who would fit right in that program. It's also good to get local kids because the team would get more of a draw."

Commissioner Hutton said franchises always try to include local students for that very reason. He said the city's team would have no problem getting the 25 players it needs because a pool of about 35,000 college students are looking to play summer baseball each year. After the Cape Cod League, the collegiate league is their first choice, he said.

The league uses wooden bats, rather than the aluminum bats used by college and high school players. Professional scouts watch the games, he said, because they want to see how well the hitters manage with wooden bats, which are used in minor league and

major league baseball.

"The signing bonuses are so great right now in the major leagues, that the scouts want to be sure a kid can swing wood," Hutton said. "There are some guys who will never make the transition from aluminum to wood. The mechanics in finding the sweet spot are very different."

Hutton said North Adams was not a second choice for the league after Pittsfield.

"Once we saw this field and this community, we would have come here, anyway," he said. "North Adams absolutely stands on its own."

He said the league possibly will consider playing at Wahconah Park in Pittsfield in the future. Two league teams in Rhode Island are about 20 miles apart and there is no problem with attendance, he said.

"I would not be at all reluctant to have a team playing in Wahconah as well as in North Adams, if that could be worked out. If anything, the local competition thing would enhance attendance," he said.

He said the timing simply wasn't right to bring a team into Pittsfield because of the possibility of a minor league team starting at the same time.

Glenn Drohan can be reached via e-mail at gdrohan@berkshireeagle.com.

Baseball proposals pitched

Three suitors for Wahconah Park formally made their pitches on Monday night.

During a parks commission meeting held at City Hall, representatives of three baseball partnerships outlined their visions for using the historic stadium.

National Pastime, which currently fields the Pittsfield Astros minor league team at the park, is moving after this season to an under-construction stadium in Troy.

Last week, parks commission chairman Cliff Nilan — in conjunction with Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. and community development director Tom Murphy — sent a letter to the interested partnerships outlining suggested "minimum conditions" to receive a license or lease for next season.

At the outset of Monday's meeting — the first the commission has held since June — Nilan announced that public comment would not be accepted.

"The commission has decided
See BASEBALL page 4

4

The Pittsfield Gazette August 16, 2001

Baseball groups make pitches for Wahconah tenancy

continued from page 1
we would not have public input this evening," he said.

Nilan also indicated that the commission will likely endorse a proposal at a meeting this coming Monday, though no meeting had formally been posted as of Wednesday.

The three groups offered different visions for Wahconah Park.

• Jim Ryan of New Hampshire touted fielding a team as part of the New England Collegiate Baseball League, which would likely hold 20 games at the park featuring college athletes. He was joined by Thomas Hutton, the commissioner of the amateur league.

• Berkshire residents Jim Bouton, Donald "Chip" Elitzer and Eric Margenau proposed fielding a locally owned independent professional team. They envision a first-year affiliation with the Atlantic League or possibly joining the Northern League.

• New York City commodities trader Jonathan Fleisig wants to bring his inactive Massachusetts Mad Dogs franchise to the city. The team, formerly in Lynn, has been dormant for the past two seasons. He was joined by Northern League commissioner Miles Wolff.

College league

Ryan was first at bat, saying his group's plan may be the underdog, but could be a great fit given Pittsfield's baseball tradition.

"We are different," said Ryan. "It has taken off in the communities it has been in."

Ryan said he first broached the idea of a collegiate team to city officials in March. "We've maintained fairly close contact," he said.

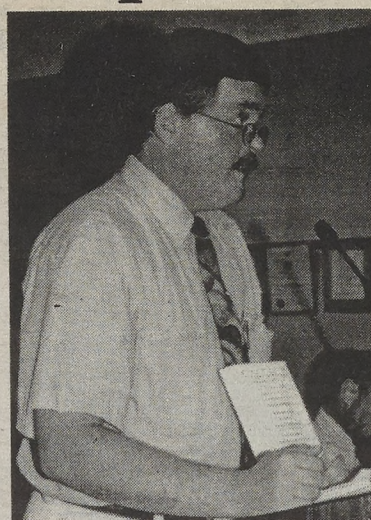
The players in the collegiate league are not paid. They hone skills and hope to be drafted by professional teams that scout the games.

Major League Baseball provides some support for the collegiate league, with local businesses providing revenues through sponsorships and promotions.

"We operate at a much more reduced expenditure level," he said.

Hutton said Pittsfield would be an excellent addition to the league, which he said is comparable to the well-known Cape Cod collegiate league.

"Our guys may not be getting paid but they're on their way up," said Hutton.



Ryan: college league offers an amateur alternative

Ryan said that the league doesn't need to be the exclusive tenant at Wahconah. He said the city seems to have many appealing options.

"You're in a wonderful position to keep baseball going," he said.

Local group

The Bouton-Elitzer-Margenau group gave the most detailed presentation, stressing the partners' varied experience and Berkshire connections.

"We are indeed a local group," said Elitzer, who is an investment banker. Bouton is a well-known former New York Yankees pitcher and author; Margenau has operated 14 minor league sports franchises.

"It's always a good idea... to evaluate a management team," said Elitzer, urging commissioners to conduct careful "due diligence."

Bouton said the group views Wahconah Park as an asset, a diamond in the rough that should be polished and marketed. He said the partners have no interest in playing elsewhere.

"Wahconah Park can have its own national identity," he said.

A locally owned team with a long-term commitment would end the "musical chairs with franchises" that have plagued the city.

"This is going to be Pittsfield's own team, 100 percent locally owned," he said. "This will be permanently embedded in Pittsfield."

Bouton said the group has many ideas to boost attendance and improve the fan experience, ranging from installing "not-so-luxury boxes" to featuring a food court with samples from local restaurants.



Bouton: local team with a national profile

The group is willing to invest \$250,000 in capital expenditures before opening day 2002, he said, and assume ongoing maintenance costs previously borne by the city. In addition to maintenance expenses, the partnership would invest at least \$25,000 each year in additional leasehold improvements.

"Because we see Wahconah Park as our home forever, we will make these investments," said Bouton.

Elitzer said the partners want a long-term lease, ideally 30 years, but with "performance-based" criteria that would ensure the city's interests are protected.

Noting that the commission's first suggested "minimum condition" is ownership of a team, Elitzer said his group can obtain one — but not until it has a commitment from the city.

"We're in a little bit of a disadvantage here tonight," he said.

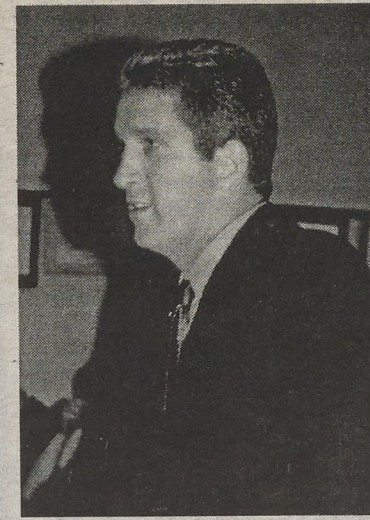
Elitzer said that the Atlantic League has agreed to allow the group to field a team in 2002 and that negotiations have taken place with a Northern League franchise, though Wolff and that league are supporting Fleisig's competing proposal.

But Elitzer argued his group's situation actually helps the city, because the group is focussed specifically on Wahconah and has vowed to stay there if given access.

"We're throwing away, very explicitly, the biggest lever any team owner has — the threat to move," he said.

Existing team

The final suitor, Fleisig, said he has had his eye on Pittsfield for some time.



Fleisig: has a dormant Northern League team waiting

"It's been a while," he said. "I've been the bridesmaid of sorts."

Fleisig said his Mad Dogs operation was very successful. "In Lynn, we were phenomenal," he said.

But historic Fraser Stadium proved unacceptable. "The facility was crumbling, it was literally condemned," he said.

Wolff said the Northern League would embrace Pittsfield.

"The Northern League would like very much to be in Pittsfield and with Jonathan Fleisig," Wolff said.

"He's a good owner ... we think he's going to be great for Pittsfield," Wolff added.

Fleisig, who owns a financially successful hockey team in California and recently sold a troubled hockey team in Topeka, said he's a big sports fan. "I'm basically just a baseball wannabe," he said.

Fleisig proposes a three-year license agreement, saying he'll work with city officials.

"Just talk to me and we'll work [things] out," he said.

Fleisig said his ownership philosophy emphasizes outreach. "I'm all about community and charity," he said, adding that he also hopes to achieve championships.

"I'm real proud of everything I've done in sports," he said.

Fleisig said his charity efforts in Bakersfield have netted awards. "What I do in charity, I'll do here," he said.

A New England sports franchise appeals more to him than California, he added.

"This is 3,000 miles away," he said. "I don't want to get on airplanes ... I

want to be local."

Fleisig said he'll become "a member of this community" if he can set up camp at Wahconah.

"It's not about ego, it's not about me, it's about baseball," he said. "No one will try harder ... we'll give it everything we have."

Fleisig said he expects a three-year license fee value of \$225,000 which would be paid through maintenance. He said the team would "do what it takes" to keep the park functional, but did not commit to capital improvements.

The presentations yielded a few questions from the four parks commissioners present.

Commissioner Anthony Massimiano asked Elitzer about that group's desire to be "custodians" of Wahconah, assuming all maintenance and serving as "gatekeeper" for other groups that want to use the park.

"I have serious concerns about essentially turning Wahconah Park to you," he said. "It is a little troublesome."

The commission currently reviews use requests for the park. Elitzer and Bouton said existing programs — including high school sports — would continue and that a clause in the agreement would allow the city to void the deal if the partnership isn't reasonable.

Massimiano asked Fleisig if he was seeking a long-term relationship or would be lured by a new stadium elsewhere.

"You give it to me, you're stuck with me," said Fleisig. "I'm not going anywhere."

In addition to Monday's meeting, the competing proposals have generated some politics.

Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. has said he is open to all plans, but he hosted an exclusive interview for the Berkshire Eagle last month at his office touting Fleisig.

Ward 7 councilor Joe Guzzo, who has campaigned to keep Wahconah open, at Tuesday's city council meeting publicly voiced his support for the Bouton-Elitzer plan.

At-large council Peter Arlos has submitted petitions and letters asking the commission to hold off making its recommendation until after the November election. He said that the backgrounds of the partnerships, particularly Fleisig, should be more carefully researched.

Parks board delays vote on baseball

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The city's Parks Commission will not decide until Oct. 5 which of three baseball proposals for Wahconah Park will gain its endorsement.

The five-member panel's unanimous decision was made last night at the urging of Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr., who sent the commission a letter in which he stated that Pittsfield native Lawrence A. Bossidy needs the additional time to craft a detailed proposal for the use of Wahconah Park.

This is the second time that the commission has delayed a decision. It initially had scheduled a ruling for Aug. 20. The mayor was not present last night at the commission's meeting at Springside House; he was represented by Thomas Murphy, director of the city's Department of Community Development.

Last week, Bossidy, who recently emerged from retirement to take the helm of Honeywell Corp., announced that he has secured a 30-day option to purchase a New York Penn league-affiliated team. He later identified the team as the Utica (N.Y.) Blue Sox.

Bossidy has said that he will

seek permission from the league to play the team in Wahconah Park for two seasons in the hope that an effort to build a new stadium in downtown Pittsfield can be rekindled.

"We must hear what his proposal is," Park Commission member James B. Conant declared last night. "Maybe he's willing to invest in Wahconah Park."

Other commission members agreed.

"I feel obligated to hear other proposals," said Sue P. Colker.

The delay will put a South County partnership's proposal to play an independent league baseball team in Wahconah Park at a disadvantage, one of the partners, Chip Elitzer of Great Barrington, said last night.

Elitzer said that the partnership, which includes former New York Yankee Jim Bouton and Eric Margenau of New York City, has been negotiating with the Atlantic League for a team. That league sets its schedule for the following season in October, said Elitzer, who declined to name a date past which a deal could not be struck.

Earlier in the meeting, Bouton rose to urge the commission to

PARK, continued on A4

Park from A1

make a decision between the partnership's proposal and one advanced by Jonathan Fleisig, a New York City-based commodities trader who owns a Northern League franchise that he aims to locate in Pittsfield.

"We ask the board to abide by its original intent and render a decision tonight," said Bouton, who read from a prepared statement. "You may have personal preferences with respect to a new, privately financed stadium, but the new stadium issue is not one that concerns you as park commissioners; the well-being of Pittsfield's public parks is your charge."

"You do not, therefore, have to wait to see how Mr. Bossidy fleshes out his proposal, because you already know that he proposes to leave Wahconah Park as soon as a new stadium can be built," the statement continues.

"You also know that Mr. Fleisig has the same intention, because his Northern League commissioner, Miles Wolff, wrote to Mayor Doyle in support of Mr. Fleisig that 'we all believe a new stadium is necessary in the future. However, in the short term, the Northern League can operate in Wahconah Park until plans for a new facility are finalized.'"

Bouton and Elitzer also assured the commission that should their proposal be accepted, the other uses to which Wahconah Park is currently put will not be curtailed.

After the meeting, Elitzer said that the partnership does not intend to leave the field.

"We'll say it again: We're not going away," he declared.

Prior to the vote, Parks Commission Chairman Clifford J. Nilan said he hopes that Elitzer and his partners and Fleisig "keep their proposals on the table."

Elitzer, who noted that his group's proposal was first advanced June 11, said he thinks it is "unfair to have to hurry up and wait, then be given what could be '24 hours' notice" to begin implementation of their proposal.

The current home of the team on which Bossidy has an option "has all the cards" to keep the squad in Utica, Peter G. Arlos told the commission last night.

Observing that Pittsfield will soon have a new mayor and the City Council will have seven new members, Arlos argued that those with "a new mandate" be allowed to have their say about the proposals.

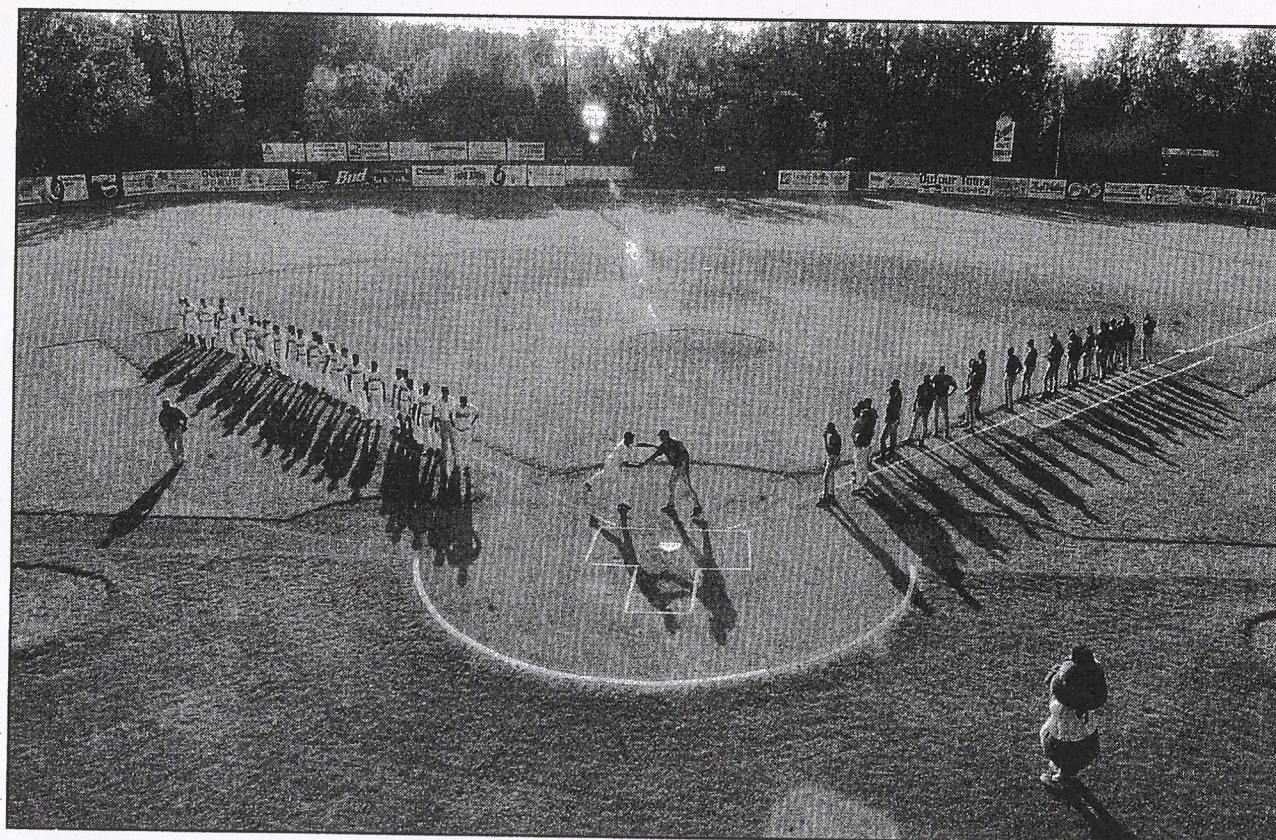
To have such important matters decided by solely "a lame-duck mayor and a lame-duck City Council" is wrong, he said.

A delay until Oct. 5 will not be necessary, declared Arlos, who contended that many of the city's most pressing electoral issues will be settled by the preliminary election Sept. 25, at which time the two mayoral candidates "should be asked their opinions" on the subject.

"You don't need to wait until Oct. 5," said Arlos. "If you do, Pittsfield won't have a team."

D.R. Bahlman can be reached via e-mail at dbahlman@berkshireeagle.com.

Play ball at Wahconah!



Pittsfield Astros manager Ivan DeJesus, left, shakes hands with Vermont Expos manager Steve Balboni before the start of last summer's home opener in June at Wahconah Park.

City secures baseball team

Northern League team agrees to 2-year commitment

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The city and the owner of a minor league baseball team yesterday reached terms on an agreement that will allow the team to play in Wahconah Park for the next two seasons.

Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. yesterday announced that Jonathan Fleisig and the city have agreed on a two-year deal that will allow Fleisig's Northern League baseball team, formerly known as the Massachusetts Mad Dogs, to play in Wahconah Park.

No maintenance fees

Under the terms of the deal, Fleisig has agreed to spend at least \$75,000 a year on the upkeep of the aging ballpark, according to the mayor's office, and the city will not be financially responsible for maintenance.

In October, the city's Parks Commission selected Fleisig's proposal for Wahconah Park, picking between it and a plan advanced by a local partnership of author and former New York Yankee Jim Bouton, Donald "Chip" Elitzer and Eric Margenau, all of whom have homes in South County.

The Parks Commission's decision was a controversial one, as a number of city residents claimed there had been no opportunity for public input and

accused the commissioners of playing favorites while ignoring the group that they claimed would be best for Wahconah Park.

Earlier this month, Mayor-elect Sara Hathaway made comments on a morning radio show that indicated she might look to find a different team to play in Wahconah Park, but two days later she clarified her stance and said she was eager to work with Fleisig.

In a written statement released yesterday announcing the agreement with Fleisig, Doyle said "a lot of good people worked very hard to reach consensus on this matter." He said he was "very satisfied" with the results.

"This has been a long and thorough process and it is my belief that after all the public debate and due diligence by the Parks Commission, we have achieved the best arrangement possible for the city of Pittsfield," Doyle said in the written statement.

Reached in his New York City office yesterday, Fleisig said he was pleased to finally have the agreement in place and is already beginning to turn his attention toward his team. However, he has only the shell of a franchise in place, since his team last played in Lynn in 1999. Between now and the start of the Northern League season, Fleisig needs to fill out the club with players, a task he plans to begin shortly.

"We have to define what type of team we want. With the dimensions of Pittsfield, we are looking at speed, power, you name it. We want to take advantage of everything," Fleisig said.

The team, which as of yet has no name, will be managed by former Boston Red Sox star George "Boomer" Scott, who managed the Mad Dogs in Lynn. Scott also played minor league baseball in Pittsfield for a Red Sox affiliate in the early 1960s.

The Northern League has seven teams in its eastern division. Miles Wolff, league president, said yesterday he expects the seven teams to release their schedules, which have already been set, to the public in the next few days.

The first game in Wahconah Park will be May 24, when the Allentown Ambassadors, from Allentown, Pa., are scheduled to visit.

"There is nothing in the world like being at a game and seeing families have a good time, enjoying hot dogs and popcorn and watching the team win," Fleisig said yesterday. "I don't profess to always be perfect, but I'm really looking forward to giving people the opportunity to get to know me and my staff and the way that I do things. I think people are going to be thrilled."

Jack Dew can be reached at jdew@berkshireeagle.com.

11/29/01



While Larry Bossidy once again wants to build a new ballpark in Pittsfield, a group led by south county residents Jim Bouton and Chip Elitzer continues to pursue the goal of restoring Wahconah Park. The Bouton-Elitzer group this week unveiled artist James Aker's renderings of their lively vision for Wahconah under their custodianship.

Baseball proposal curves continue

continued from page 1

it would be good to hear him out."

Bossidy envisions fielding a team at Wahconah Park for one or two years while a new stadium is constructed — without a civic authority — at the corner of Center and West streets.

"Even though the vote went against us, the conditions have changed," said Bossidy. "I'm going to try to reignite the effort."

He cited three improved factors. "First, I have a team now," he said. "Second, we're no longer looking at eminent domain or a civic authority ... and the group of people who [would] raise the money say it's there."

The new stadium and civic authority effort had been championed — and largely funded — by the Berkshire Eagle and Berkshire Bank. The Eagle, through a limited liability partnership, still owns a 2.5 acre parcel of land that would be the heart of the stadium.

Bossidy did not specify how the stadium would be configured to avoid controversial land-takings — which proponents previously stated might be essential.

He did state that city officials would need to devise an alternative governing apparatus. "The city has to find a way to run this now without a civic authority," he said.

Bossidy said his pursuit of a franchise has been time consuming. "I've been waiting on this for a year," he said.

Promoting vitality

Bossidy said his desire remains to boost his hometown. "I think it's good for Pittsfield," he said. "I have always had an interest in helping Pittsfield."

He said that an affiliated team such as the New York-Penn League is essential. "If there's an independent team in there [at Wahconah], that's the end of organized baseball," he said.

Bossidy said that he will need to acquire a waiver from New York-Penn League officials to allow play for a year or two at Wahconah Park because the facility is not up to their standards.

Parks commission chairman Nilan

has yet to receive official details about Bossidy's plans but is encouraged.

"This could be the best of both worlds," he said, noting the possibility of a new stadium with the parks commission retaining control of Wahconah Park. Nilan said the commission's goal has always been to get the best proposal for the city.

Commission member James Conant said Wednesday he too will support delaying the Wahconah decision. "If we need to postpone it, then so be it," he said. "Any proposal made has to receive consideration and our obligation is to conduct due diligence."

Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. was on vacation and unavailable for comment.

Mayoral aide Curt Preisser said the mayor has been in contact with Bossidy and is encouraged by his renewed interest.

"There are still some things Mr. Bossidy needs to accomplish," said Preisser. "This is not a done deal... but the goal has always been to have affiliated baseball in the City of Pittsfield."

Preisser added that "the mayor has said for a long time that Pittsfield needs a new facility."

Conant on Wednesday attended an independent presentation at City Hall by Jim Bouton and Donald Elitzer, who have been touting a plan to renovate Wahconah Park and bring an independent team to the city.

The Bouton group's main rival had been Jonathan Fleisig, who last week touted a plan to bring his dormant Northern League independent team to Wahconah. Another suitor — the New England Collegiate Baseball League — has dropped out, according to Nilan.

Saving a treasure

Bouton said he learned of Bossidy's return to the debate from a reporter shortly prior to his group's Wednesday presentation. He said Bossidy's involvement doesn't change the philosophical issue at the center of discussion.

"This has always been about preserving Wahconah vs. a new stadium," he said.

A late-in-the-game development isn't a total shock. "We've always

suspected that there would be an August surprise," he said. "We saw that the delays would probably be for a purpose ... it doesn't change our position, it doesn't change the decision faced by the parks commission."

Bouton said the community must choose between "a commitment to Wahconah Park or essentially a new stadium." If his group isn't given a chance to save the historic part, he said, "you can kiss Wahconah goodbye."

"In the two years it would take to build a new stadium, we could build a future for Wahconah," he said.

Surprised

Opponents of the civic authority and Eagle stadium site were disappointed that the issue has resurfaced.

Jay Carberry, owner of Bunnell Auto Parts on West Street — in the path of the last publicly revealed stadium footprint — said "this is a complete shock to me."

Stadium proponents never met with Carberry to discuss his property prior to the civic authority vote. He said "there's been absolutely no contact [since the election] with me about this."

David Potts, one of the leaders of the anti-civic authority effort and now a mayoral candidate, said "isn't this something ... I can't believe this." He termed the announcement "good old boy politics."

Potts has been excited by plans to renovate Wahconah Park which he says city voters favor.

"The people's will is to save Wahconah Park, but they just won't let that happen," he said.

Anne Leaf, another leading civic authority opponent, said she is discouraged that plans to restore Wahconah Park appear not to be getting fair review.

"My phone has been ringing off the hook the last couple days from people supporting the [Bouton-Elitzer proposal]," she said.

The spectre of the new stadium arising again in her neighborhood shocked Leaf. "How can they possibly have enough land to do that given what they said before?" she asked. Leaf suggested that she's prepared to fight again to preserve her neighborhood, if need be.

Bossidy makes new stadium pitch

With option to buy a team, city native wants Wahconah Park for year or two, then a new ballpark

Larry Bossidy on Wednesday threw a sharp, unexpected curveball into the city's debate over the future of Wahconah Park.

Bossidy has obtained an exclusive 30-day option to purchase a New York-Penn League franchise and hopes to bring the team to Pittsfield.

"My first preference is to locate it in Pittsfield," said Bossidy, who had publicly abandoned attempts to field a Pittsfield team after voters rejected the civic authority on June 5.

Bossidy — with the support of Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. — will ask the parks commission to hold off awarding rights to Wahconah Park until he can submit a proposal.

The commission last week heard proposals from three groups that wish to field a baseball team next season.

Parks commission chairman Cliff

Nilan termed the delay request reasonable. "If Mr.

Bossidy wants the commission to delay its decision, I think most

likely we will delay the decision," he said.

"He's a Pittsfield person, he has character ...

See BASEBALL page 7



Signed, sealed, delivered



Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Mike Kardamis, president and general manager of Pittsfield's new Northern League franchise, speaks to the assembled media while Pittsfield Mayor Gerald S. Doyle and team owner Jonathan Fleisig look on at yesterday's press conference in Pittsfield.

Fleisig: 'It's nice to be part of the community'

By Howard Herman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — A nearly two-year odyssey ended yesterday, when Jonathan Fleisig and Pittsfield Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. signed a two-year licensing agreement, which gives Fleisig's Flyball Inc. the right to operate a Northern League franchise at Wahconah Park this summer.

"It's been 18 months since I started trying to get here," Fleisig said before the signing ceremonies at the Top of the Crowne Plaza. "Most people don't know that. I have to tell you I'm thrilled to be here."

Happy with the results

Looking out the windows to the snow-capped hills surrounding downtown Pittsfield, the baseball team owner couldn't contain his enthusiasm.

"It's beautiful outside right now," he continued. "The only [day] that's going to be better is Opening Day. It's nice to be part of the community — which is something I've wanted to say for a long time."

The two-year licensing agreement, which was finalized

on Nov. 27, calls for Flyball Inc. to pay a license fee of \$75,000 per year for each year of the agreement. According to the agreement, the money will go to improvements and maintenance at Wahconah Park.

If the first-year expenses exceed \$75,000, then the additional money will be subtracted from the second year's payment. However, should the team not spend the allotted figure, the team will have to pay the city of Pittsfield the difference on or before Oct. 20, 2002.

Non-structural responsibilities

The team will be responsible for all necessary non-structural repairs: including electrical and plumbing repairs, field repair, the park's sound system, locker rooms, seating and scoreboard. Structural repairs involve the roof, foundation, exterior wall structure, load bearing walls and repairs to the electrical, mechanical and plumbing systems where the systems attach to the park's plumbing.

"I thought they were very fair, but very difficult negotiations," said Fleisig. "I want to thank Mike McDonald [of the

FLEISIG, continued on C3

Fleisig from C1 12/11/01

Cain, Hibbard & Myers law firm] for all the help and guidance."

"In the end," said Doyle, "I believe the city of Pittsfield is the recipient of the best possible agreement for using Wahconah Park."

"We went back and forth quite a bit," the mayor continued. "I think it's the right thing for Pittsfield — and we do have a great tenant now at Wahconah Park."

The Park Commission unanimously voted for Fleisig's proposal to house his Northern League team at Wahconah Park, ending a protracted, and often acrimonious battle over the future of professional baseball in the city.

Fleisig's plan came to the forefront after a plan to bring another New York-Penn League team, owned by Pittsfield native and Honeywell chief executive officer Larry Bossidy, fell through.

Flyball, Inc. was chosen over a proposal made by South Berkshire residents Jim Bouton, Chip Elitzer and Eric Margenau.

The franchise replaces Bill Gladstone's New York-Penn League team, which will play its games in Troy, N.Y., this summer.

The team yesterday unveiled its 2002 schedule and announced a Name-the-Team contest. The contest begins this morning, and is co-sponsored by the Berkshire Eagle and Pittsfield-radio station WUPE-FM.

Those who enter the contest will receive two tickets for the May 26 home game against the Allentown Ambassadors.

According to team president/general manager Mike Kardamis, everyone who enters will receive two tickets for the May 26 home game against the Allentown Ambassadors.

The person who submits the winning entry, which will be chosen shortly after the new year, will receive two box seat season tickets.

The contest, which has an entry blank in this morning's Eagle and can be found online at www.pittsfieldbaseball.com, allows entrants to vote on five possible names or write in a name of their choosing.

Entrants are asked to submit a donation with the entry — with the proceeds going to charity. It is a similar setup to how athletes are elected to the Pittsfield Interscholastic Football Hall of Fame and other local Hall of Fame activities.

"When we got together with Andy Mick, the publisher of The Berkshire Eagle, he suggested that we tie in with Girls' Inc. When you enter, we suggest a \$5 donation or whatever you want, and it'll be donated to Girls' Inc. Flyball is going to match the total donation. It could be a really good thing for all involved."

The newest Northern League team begins play at Wahconah Park on Friday, May 24 against Allentown. The franchise plays a 90-game schedule, with 45 home games. Kardamis said he was happy with the schedule.

"The schedule always works out. You always want the weekend dates, but it has to be an evenly balanced schedule," he explained. "As far as schedules go, I have no problem with it."

The schedule is almost equally balanced over the summer, as the team has seven home games on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

The club has eight Thursday home games, six on Sundays and three on Mondays. No team plays on July 4, so Kardamis said that the team's holiday fireworks show will be on July 3.

The general manager went on to say that there will be several fireworks shows, numerous promotions and on-field shows during the season, but the schedule has yet to be finalized.

The season is divided into two halves, with the first half ending on July 10. The Northern League All-Star Game is Aug. 6 in Quebec City.

Baseball from A1

of property rights on the lessor. Nilan said that a lease could not be granted without the approval of the state Legislature.

In a prepared statement, Nilan also said that the South County partnership does not appear to him to fully comprehend the scope of the responsibility that it would assume by leasing Wahconah Park.

"Wahconah Park is located in the 100-year flood plain and there are no permits that would change that," Nilan said. "In fact, no filling of any kind is permitted under the Wetlands Protection Act anywhere on the property, which means that the only way to make any changes anywhere in the park is to take neighboring land by eminent domain to use as compensatory land. ... It concerns me that Mr. Bouton and Mr. Elitzer appear to be unaware of these constraints when they discuss their ambitious plans for the property."

And, he said, while "rooftop boxes are a lovely idea, it would seem unlikely that they can be supported structurally by the old stadium, nor is there a way to make them handicapped accessible, as would be required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, for the amount of money [the partnership promises] to spend. ... In short, I believe that while Mr. Bouton and Mr. Elitzer are blessed with good intentions, they would be getting in far over their heads should they assume responsibility for this park, which the city has maintained for some 82 years."

Leasing Wahconah Park, commission member Anthony G. Massimiano Jr. said in a prepared statement, could effectively "foreclose" any other use to which the park might be put because the lease would grant control of the park to the leasing entity.

Wahconah Park, said Massimiano, is a "true community resource" that has been and should continue to be used for activities ranging from high school football

games to drum and bugle corps competitions.

Massimiano also expressed gratitude to Lawrence A. Bossidy, a Pittsfield native who is chief executive officer of Honeywell Corp., for advancing a proposal — which he later withdrew — to temporarily situate a major league-affiliated team in Wahconah Park while a new stadium was built.

Bossidy, who Massimiano said has "remained a gentleman throughout" the often-contentious debate surrounding Wahconah Park's future, has agreed to donate \$1 million to the city for use in its park system.

As the owner of a Northern League franchise, albeit with a team that has been inactive for two years, Fleisig has the edge over Bouton, Elitzer and Margenau, said Park Commission member James B. Conant. The South County partnership's plan, he said, "is far too demanding on the Parks Commission," which Conant declared "would have no say" over the stewardship of Wahconah Park.

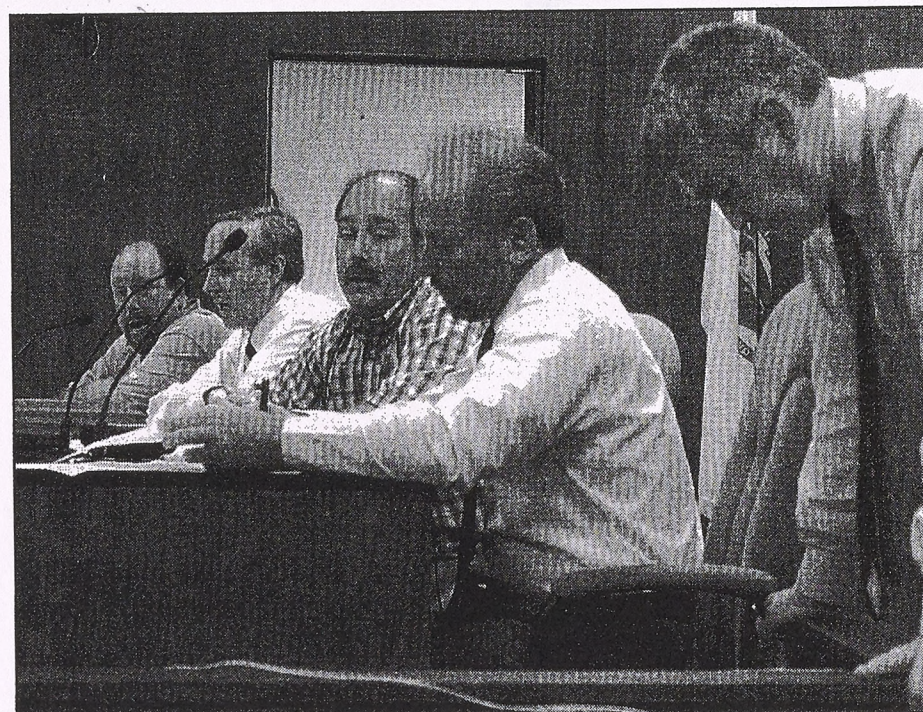
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Parks Commission member Robert J. Smith agreed, declaring that he is "not for giving away a public park for 30 years with no control."

The partnership's proposal, said Smith, "is a lot of sizzle and no steak," whereas Fleisig's "has steak — he has a team."

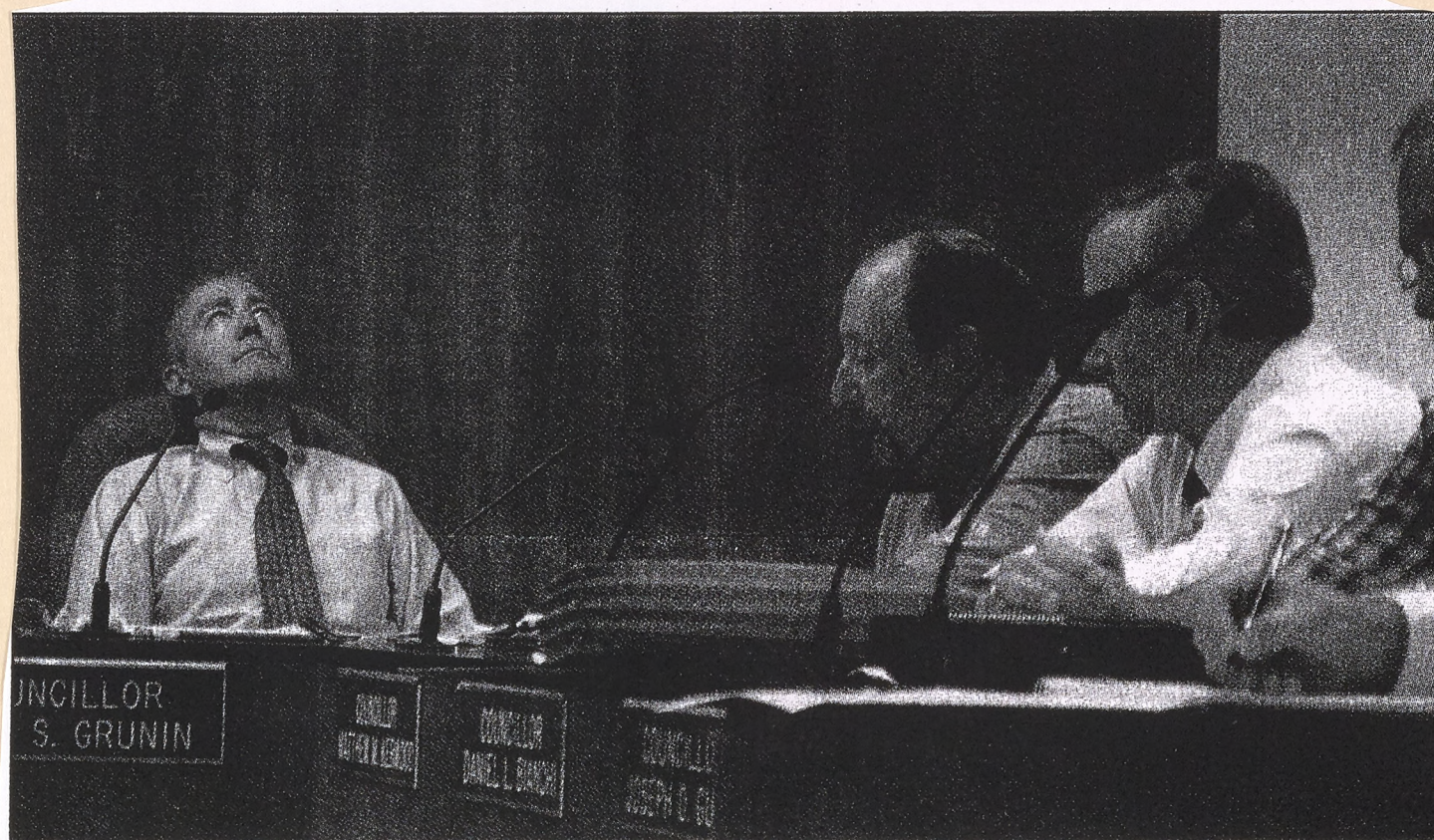
A telephone hookup permitted Park Commission member Sue P. Colker to participate in the discussion and vote. Colker, who was unable to attend the meeting because of family obligations, said she hopes "the commission and the community can move on" to other matters after the decision is made.

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Clifford J. Nilan, Parks Commission chairman, far right, listens as Sue Colker and others, from left, are commission members Robert Smith, Anthony Massimiano, Conant and Director of Community Services Robert Mellace.

Game plan for Wahconah Park



Clifford J. Nilan, Parks Commission chairman, at far left, listens as Robert Smith states his reasons for supporting Jonathan Fleisig's proposal. Others shown are commission members Anthony Massimiano, second from right, and James Conant.

Fleisig proposal gets nod

By D.R. Bahlman
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PITTSFIELD — The city's Parks Commission voted last night to recommend that Jonathan Fleisig be granted a license that would make Wahconah Park the home of his Massachusetts Mad Dogs baseball team for at least two seasons.

The five-member commission's vote was unanimous. It represents a defeat of a South County partnership's quest to secure a long-term lease of Wahconah Park, where the partners had hoped to field an independent league team.

The commission recommended that city officials negotiate with Fleisig a license that would have an initial term of two years with a renewal option for an additional two years. The license, commissioners said, would be similar to those negotiated with previous summer occupants of the park, including the Pittsfield Mets and Pittsfield Astros of the Class A New York-Penn League.

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Park Commissioner James Conant said that he feels 'no obligation to sell off the parks to the highest bidder.'

League, an independent league that has nearby franchises in Albany and Glens Falls, N.Y.

Former New York Yankee Jim Bouton of Egremont and Donald "Chip" Elitzer, a former investment banker who lives in Great Barrington, had told the commission that they could secure an Atlantic League team to play for one season if their proposal was accepted, and that they could secure another team in 2003. The partnership, which also includes part-time Stockbridge resident

Eric Margenau, sought an exclusive 20- to 30-year lease of Wahconah Park, renewable every two years at its option.

Following the meeting, which had been scheduled to take place in a conference room behind the City Council chamber but was later moved to the chamber to accommodate a crowd of about 40 spectators, Elitzer declined comment. Bouton, who had a speaking engagement in Cooperstown, N.Y., was not present last night.

Fleisig, who also did not attend the meeting, could not be reached for comment at his home in New York City.

In their remarks, some commissioners expressed reluctance to grant an exclusive, long-term lease to Wahconah Park to any private group. The panel's chairman, Clifford J. Nilan, pointed out the distinction between a license, which grants limited and revocable rights of use and access to property, and a lease, which bestows a wide range

BASEBALL, continued on A5



Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Team effort

Pittsfield Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr., left, and Jonathan Fleisig sign a license agreement at the Crowne Plaza yesterday under which Fleisig will operate a Northern League baseball team at Wahconah Park for two years. Story, Page C1.

Mutual from A1

Commerce. That is expected to begin in January.

Dennis Otmaskin, president and chief operating officer of Harleysville Worcester and chairman of the Berkshire Mutual board, was not available to comment.

A local board member, H. Ashley Smith Jr., concurred with the Harleysville explanation.

"Operating in the Massachusetts automobile insurance market is extremely difficult and is also political," said Smith, an investment counselor with Renaissance Investment Group LLC in Pittsfield.

The state sets the rates insurance companies can charge — reducing them this year by 8.3 percent — and bills companies for losses incurred by a program for high-risk drivers, he explained.

Out of options'

"How do you run a business when you can't set your price and you have expenses handed to you that you would never agree with?" Smith asked. "It's a very difficult climate to operate in. ... We've run out of options, basically."

The decision presents Greylock Federal Credit Union with an uninvited choice of insurance partners. Customers of the credit union have been able to purchase automobile insurance at a discount from Berkshire Mutual, an option chosen by 12,000, or nearly one-quarter, of Greylock's 54,000 customers.

"This news is distressing and evokes a wide range of concerns," credit union President and CEO James H. Lynch Jr. said in a statement issued yesterday. "Greylock is concerned about the Berkshire Mutual policyholders generally and Greylock members who hold such policies specifically."

He cited the impact on Berk-

Baseball from A1

of property rights on the lessor. Nilan said that a lease could not be granted without the approval of the state Legislature.

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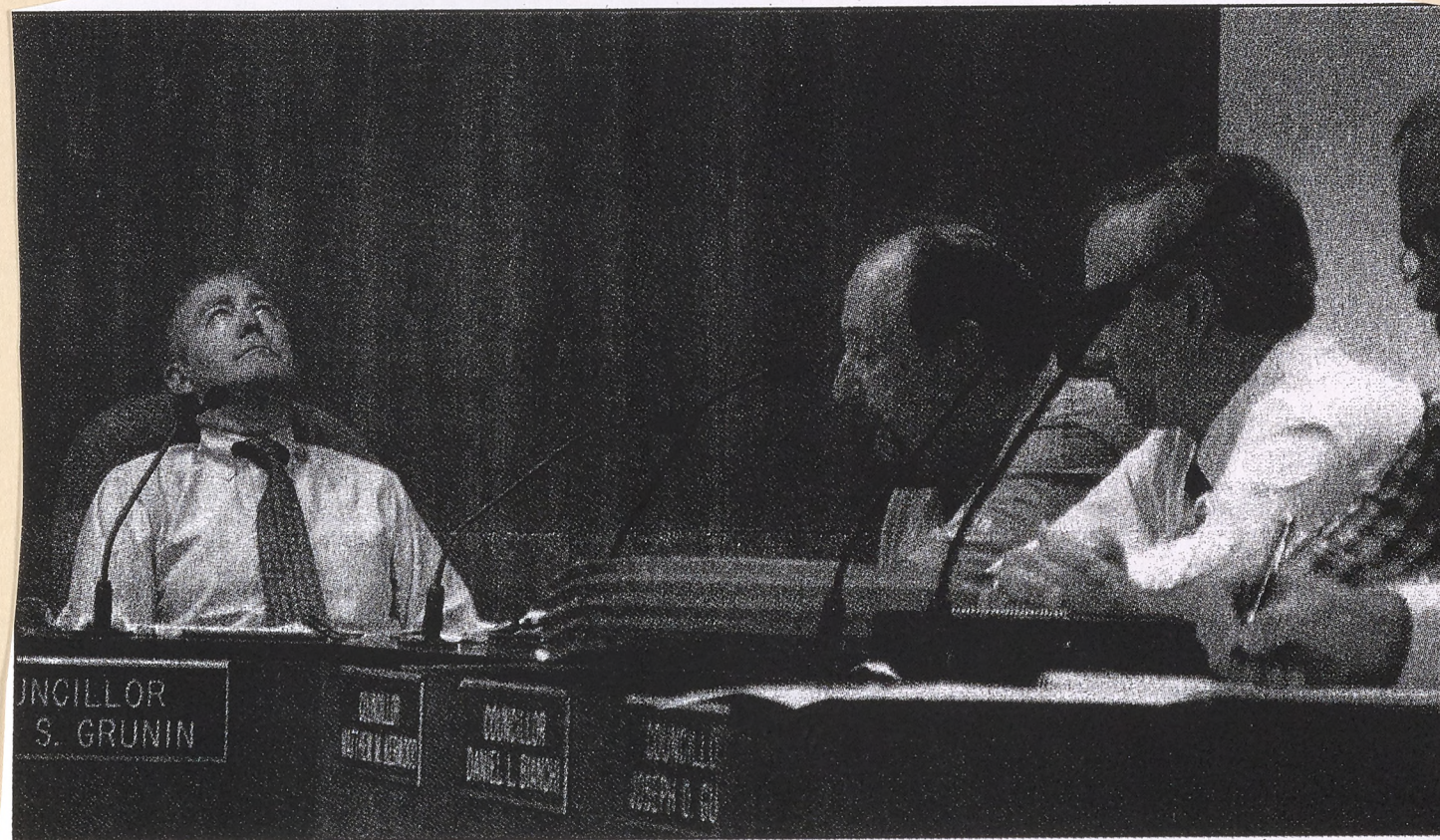
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BASEBALL, continued on A5

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Dennis Otmaskin, president and chief operating officer of Harleysville Worcester and chairman of the Berkshire Mutual board, was not available to comment.

A local board member, H. Ashley Smith Jr., concurred with the Harleysville explanation.

"Operating in the Massachusetts automobile insurance market is extremely difficult and is also political," said Smith, an investment counselor with Renaissance Investment Group LLC in Pittsfield.

The state sets the rates insurance companies can charge — reducing them this year by 8.3 percent — and bills companies for losses incurred by a program for high-risk drivers, he explained.

Out of options

"How do you run a business when you can't set your price and you have expenses handed to you that you would never agree with?" Smith asked. "It's a very difficult climate to operate in. ... We've run out of options, basically."

The decision presents Greylock Federal Credit Union with an uninvited choice of insurance partners. Customers of the credit union have been able to purchase automobile insurance at a discount from Berkshire Mutual, an option chosen by 12,000, or nearly one-quarter, of Greylock's 54,000 customers.

"This news is distressing and evokes a wide range of concerns," credit union President and CEO James H. Lynch Jr. said in a statement issued yesterday. "Greylock is concerned about the Berkshire Mutual policyholders generally and Greylock members who hold such policies specifically."

He cited the impact on Berk-



Team effort

Pittsfield Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr., left, and Jonathan Fleisig sign a license agreement at the Crowne Plaza yesterday under which Fleisig will operate a Northern League baseball team at Wahconah Park for two years. Story, Page C1.

EGG SCRAMBLE



An eggciting time was had by all on Saturday at the Boys' & Girls' Club, where the Easter Egg Hunt was on.



René Tarjick and Morgan Leighfield captured colored eggs during the Easter Egg Hunt at the Boys' & Girls' Club on Saturday.

The Parks Department sponsored the city's annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday at the Boys' & Girls' Club on Melville Street.



Jenn Smith and her daughter, Mya Wiles, enjoyed the Easter Egg hunt on Saturday morning, but Mya decided to stay on the sidelines and avoid the mad dash for eggs.

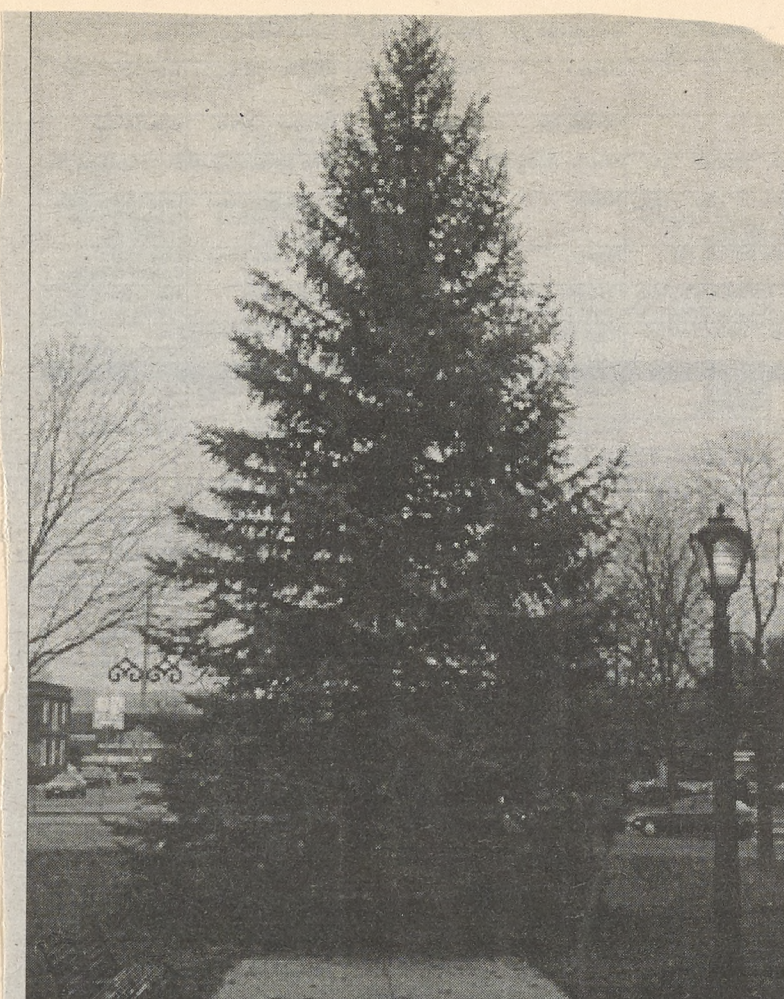
Prizes are awarded in each age division to children who find specially colored eggs.

This year's recipients included:

- Matthew Barry, age 2
- Ciana Clairmont, 2
- Connor Hassan, 3
- Nyanna Gilbert, 2
- Shane Johnson, 5
- Molly Dimise, 5
- Lindsey Robins, 5
- Amelia Johnson, 5
- Cameron Arace, 5
- Brianna Gerwaski, 6
- Tamara Beals, 7
- Denzel Moody, 7
- Cindy Hamilton, 7
- Shelbi Clary, 6
- Brian Barry, 8
- Ashley Benlien, 8
- Tiffany McGuirk, 8
- Amanda Benlien, 9
- James Johnson, 7



This youngster has her eyes on the prize. She and dozens of other kids dashed on the floor of the Boys' & Girls Club, along with their parents, to capture colored plastic eggs.



The city's Christmas tree lighting ceremony will be held on Friday at 7 p.m. at Park Square.

The event, sponsored by the Department of Community Services/ Parks & Recreation, will include a fire truck with Santa aboard. Applebee's will serve hot chocolate. Paul Nixon will lead caroling.

This year, the 35 foot Blue Spruce was donated by Winthrop Wyckoff.

11/29/01

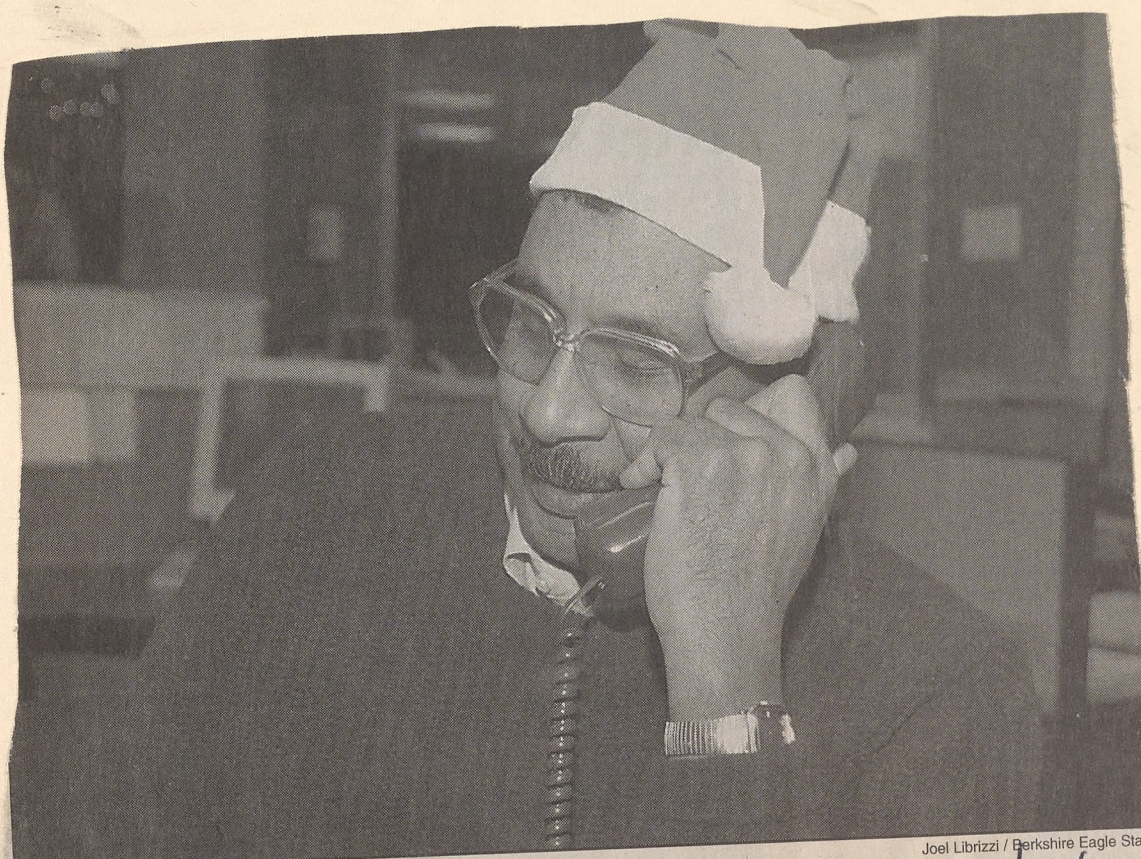
Annual North Pole calling will take place next week

Santa volunteers and Santa operators will be making personal telephone calls to Pittsfield children for the 20th annual North Pole Calling Program on Monday, December 10 and Tuesday, December 11 from 4:30-7 p.m.

Information sheets have been sent home with children in kindergarten and Grades 1 & 2.

Forms are also available at the Parks Department office at 874 North Street and must be returned by Friday, December 7.

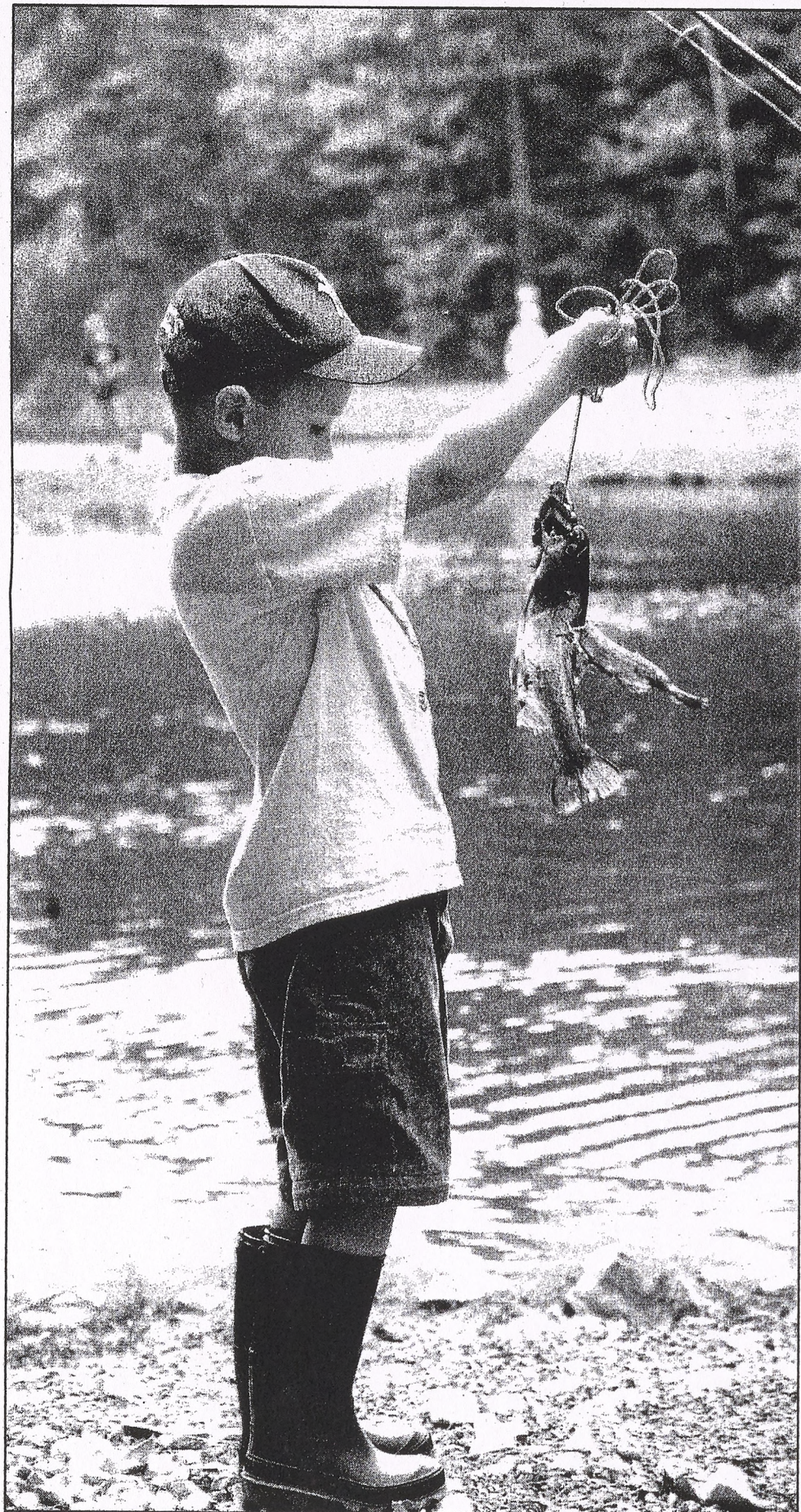
Last year, more than 425 children were called by Santa. 12/6/01



You want a what?

Santa Claus, resembling George Anderson of the Knights of Columbus, chats with local youngsters this week as part of the North Pole Calling Program, which is operated by volunteers for the Pittsfield Department of Community Service.

Joel Librizzi / Berkshire Eagle Staff
12/13/01



Catch of the day

Jordan Chapman, 5, of Pittsfield takes a closer look at the trout he caught during the Children's Fishing Derby on Saturday at Wild Acres sanctuary in Pittsfield.

Shannon DeCelle / Berkshire Eagle Staff

5/21/01

PITTSFIELD: The Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation has announced the winners of the costume awards in the 57th annual Halloween Parade as follows:

David Bertoldi, Conte School, Grade 3; Jade Roy, Williams School, Grade 2; Taylor Turner, Crosby School, preschool; Alexander Fowler, Conte, Grade 5; Tara McDonnell, Crosby, Grade 3; Morgan Bertolozzi, Egremont School, Grade 2; Sarah Terrell, Morning-side School, Grade 2; Casey Carchedi, Egremont; Michael Coelho, Egremont, kindergarten; Billy New, Williams, Grade 3; Nicholas Russo, Egremont, Grade 3; Rebecca Hover, Egremont, Grade 2; Jessica Hover, Egremont, kindergarten; and Jill Downing, Williams, prekindergarten. 11/19/01

Santa Claus to phone kids

PITTSFIELD — The Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation Santa volunteers and Santa operators will be making personal telephone calls to Pittsfield children for its 20th annual North Pole Calling Program on Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 10 and 11, from 4:30 to 7, both days.

Information sheets have been sent home with children in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2.

Forms are also available at the Department office at 874 North St. and must be returned by Friday, Dec. 7.

Last year, more than 425 children were called by Santa. 11/29/01

City Christmas tree to be lit

PITTSFIELD — The Christmas tree lighting ceremony at Park Square will be held Friday, Nov. 30, at 7 p.m.

Sponsored by the Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation, the event will include a fire truck driven by Jim Conant, with Santa aboard. Applebee's will serve hot chocolate and Paul Nixon will lead caroling.

The 35-foot blue spruce was donated by Winthrop Wyckoff.

The Pittsfield Highway Department, Park Department maintenance staff under the direction of Anthony Stracuzzi, and Thomas Grizey from the city Emergency Management Agency, installed the tree.

Grizey and his staff also will decorate the tree. 11/23/01

BERKSHIRE EAGLE SUNDAY APRIL 15-2001

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On the Web: www.BerkshireEagle.com



Shannon DeCelle / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Egg beaters

Children whiz around at ferocious speed yesterday to pick up candy-filled eggs during an Easter egg hunt at the Boys' and Girls' Club in Pittsfield. Special prizes were given to the finders of certain colored eggs in each age division.

PITTSFIELD: The annual children's fishing derby for ages 6 to 14 will be held tomorrow and Sunday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Wild Acres Pond on South Mountain Road. The event is sponsored by the Friends of Wild Acres and the Department of Recreation. 5/18/01

Trick-or-treat Oct. 31 in Pittsfield

PITTSFIELD — The Board of Park Commissioners has announced that trick-or-treat night will take place in Pittsfield on Wednesday, Oct. 31, from 5:30 to 7. Children should be accompanied by an adult. 10/4/01

Also, the Halloween Parade will be held on Friday, Oct. 26, at 7 p.m.

As in the past, the route will begin at East and First streets, pass Park Square and proceed to North Street to Wahconah Park.

Halloween parade meeting scheduled

The Parks Department will hold a Halloween Parade organizational meeting on Friday at 7 p.m.

The parade will be held on Friday, October 26 at 7 p.m. All entries to the parade must have a theme that is Halloween related. Groups wishing to take part in the parade should have a representative at this first meeting.

Local organizations are invited to attend if they plan to enter a float, band or marching unit. For information call 499-9343. 9/27/01

Meeting set on Halloween Parade

PITTSFIELD — The city's Department of Community Services/Parks & Recreation will hold its second organizational meeting for the 57th annual Halloween Parade, which is sponsored by the department.

There is still plenty of time to enter floats, bands or marching units in the parade.

The meeting will be held on Friday, Oct. 12, at 7 at Springside House, 874 North St. Any group willing to participate must have a representative present at this meeting.

For further information regarding the Halloween Parade: 499-9343. 10/5/01

Park Square Spruce

The city's official tree lighting ceremony will be held Friday at 7 p.m. at Park Square.

The event, sponsored by the parks department, will include the Eagles Band. Santa will arrive aboard a fire truck driven by Jim Conant. Paul Nixon will lead caroling.

A 50-foot Blue Spruce was donated by Lamar and Laurie Smith and family. 11/30/00

Easter Egg Hunt planned in Pittsfield

PITTSFIELD — The annual Easter Egg Hunt sponsored by the Pittsfield Boys & Girls Club and the Parks and Recreation Department will be Saturday at the Boys & Girls Club on Melville Street.

The event is open to Pittsfield children only and is arranged in four age groups. The hunt for 2- and 3-year-olds will be at 1; for 4- and 5-year-olds, 1:30; 6- and 7-year-olds, 2; and 8- and 9-year-olds, 2:30.

Prizes will be awarded in each age group for children finding the purple, yellow, blue, green and orange eggs. Children are asked to bring their own bags or baskets.

For more information: Parks and Recreation at 499-9343. 4/9/01

City egg scramble set for Saturday

The annual Easter egg hunt co-sponsored by the Boys & Girls Club and the city Parks Department will be held on Saturday at the Pittsfield Boys & Girls Club on Melville Street.

The free event is open to Pittsfield children only and is arranged in four age groups as follows:

- 4 & 5 year olds—1:30 p.m.
- 6 & 7 year olds—2 p.m.
- 8 & 9 year olds—2:30 p.m.

Prizes will be awarded in each age group for children finding the purple, yellow, blue, green and orange eggs. Children should bring their own bags or baskets.

For more information call 499-9343. 4/2/01

Clean-up program set for Saturday at Springside Park

Members of the Hebert Arboretum, the Red Cross Youth Service Group, the Junior League of Berkshire County, and the Friends of Springside will celebrate Earth Day 2001 with a clean up and beautification of Springside Park on Saturday.

Sessions will take place at 9 a.m. and at 1 p.m. Volunteers are asked to meet at the parking lot near the children's playground at the site of the former children's zoo off upper North Street. The rain date is Sunday, April 22.

The public is invited to join the effort. Participants are encouraged to wear thick-soled shoes or terrain-friendly footwear. Bags and gloves will be provided by the city parks department.

For information call Judy Gitelson at 445-5540. 4/19/01



Photos by Mandana Marsh

Rebecca Schnopp was an Irish fairy on the Williams School float, 'Halloween Around the World.' Miller Petroleum Systems' 'The Dragon's Nest' float took first place; Sacred Heart School's 'Haunted Forest' took second.

Howling wind puts a chill in parade crowd

By Tony Dobrowski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — A brisk wind whipped down North Street last night like a ghost howling through a graveyard. That made it fitting weather for the ghouls and goblins of all ages who participated in the city's 57th annual Halloween Parade.

But the stiff wind and temperatures in the mid-40s did combine to scare a lot of spectators away. Pittsfield Parks and Recreation Director John C. Marchesi estimated the crowd at around 8,000.

"It was one of the smallest crowds in years," said Marchesi, who added the weather always has a lot to do with the turnout. The department sponsors the parade.

The weather was also a factor last year when an estimated 13,000 to 14,000 spectators attended the parade; balmy temperatures made downtown Pittsfield feel more like August than October.

The wind was so strong last night that it blew souvenirs off vendors' carts. Adults could be seen covering their children with blankets.



Shaun Pero was a junior Captain Hook on the Stearns School float.

"It's just too cold to be outside," said Julia Turner, who watched the parade with her 5-year-old daughter, Alana, from inside her parked sports utility vehicle on North Street.

"But it's warmer in here!" Alana said with a smile.

A total of 19 floats and vehicles, and two bands along with 14 schools and marching units, took part in last night's parade. The procession began on East Street in front of Girls Incorporated, then traveled through Park

PARADE, continued on A4

10/27/01



Photo by Mandana Marsh

The winning float in last night's Halloween Parade in Pittsfield was Miller Petroleum Systems' 'Dragon's Nest.'

Parade from A1

Square to North Street before ending at Wahconah Street.

Miller Petroleum Systems was awarded the \$150 first prize for best float, for an entry titled "The Dragon's Nest." The float featured what appeared to be a mechanical dragon that could move its head in and out of a cave.

The second-place prize of \$125 was awarded to Sacred Heart School's float, "Haunted Forest." Crosby Elementary School received the \$100 third prize for "Crosby's Creatures."

Although it didn't win a prize,

the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority's bus float was one of the more creative entries: a BRTA bus covered with paper streamers that had black lights and noise coming out of the interior.

Bringing to life every bus rider's nightmare, a character costumed as an elderly woman kept limping after the bus while a ghoulish figure stood at the door denying her entry. A headless, bloody corpse tied to the bus's back bumper made scraping noises on the pavement as it was dragged down North Street.

The Pittsfield High School band was selected top band, with The Eagles' Band awarded second place.

In addition to the floats, adults and youngsters paraded in a wide assortment of costumes. Besides hundreds of variations on ghosts, skeletons, witches and monsters, the costumes included a youngster dressed as an Oreo cookie and a man wearing a Conehead costume that included such scrupulous attention to detail as polka-dot clothes and large furry slippers.

Patriotism also was in evidence as several people carried small American flags, or wore apparel designed to look like the flag. The Berkshire County Sheriff's Office float was titled "God Bless America" and featured a wooden replica of a NASA space ship.

The Pittsfield Parade Committee's float, organized around a pirate motif, contained an American flag made out of lights.

Andrew Mara Williams, 7, took a simple route to creativity in designing his costume. He wore a big red cardboard box over his torso designed to make him look like a Lego block.

Dorothy Mara said her son decided to be a Lego after finding out another youngster was going to do the same thing.

"That's how we got the idea," she said.

Tony Dobrowolski can be reached by e-mail at tdobrowolski@berkshireeagle.com.

Halloween Parade final meeting set

PITTSFIELD — The Department of Community Services/Parks & Recreation will hold the final organizational meeting for its 57th annual Halloween Parade.

The meeting will be Monday at 7 p.m. at the department's office at Springside House, 874 North St. All groups with a unit in the parade must have a representative present. Information: the department at 499-9343.

10/16/01

Parade, trick-or-treat dates selected

The parks department has announced Pittsfield's Halloween calendar. Trick-Or-Treat night will take place in Pittsfield on Wednesday, October 31 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Children should be accompanied by an adult.

The Halloween parade will be held on Friday, October 26 at 7 p.m. The route will begin at East and First Streets, pass Park Square and proceed to North Street to Wahconah Park.

10/17/01

Pittsfield marking Halloween with annual parade on Friday

PITTSFIELD — The city's 57th annual Halloween parade will step off at 7 p.m. Friday.

Marching units will line up on the south side of East Street no later than 6:30. Floats and vehicles are to line up on the north side of East Street facing Park Square no later than 6:30.

The line of march for this year's parade consists of 19 floats and vehicles, two bands and 14 schools and marching units. The parade will begin on East Street and pass through Park Square onto North Street. It will end on Wahconah Street. Grand marshal is Berkshire County Sheriff Carmen C. Massimiano.

Judges will award three prizes to floats and three prizes to bands: first prize is \$150, second is \$125 and third is \$100.

In addition, 25 individual award gift certificates will be presented to children marching in the parade. Selection of costume awards will be made prior to the parade by judges who will be stationed in the line-up area. Costume award winners will be presented ribbons to wear on their costumes. Costume awards are provided by Friendly's Ice Cream Restaurants.

Prizes can be redeemed with the back portion of the ribbons at the Department of Parks & Recreation, 874 North St., which

sponsors the parade in conjunction with the city's Department of Community Services.

The parade line-up is as follows:

Section I — Corner of First Street & East Street to Bartlett Avenue

1. Pittsfield Police Cruiser; 2. V.F.W. Post 448 Color Guard; 3. Halloween Grand Marshal Sheriff Carmen C. Massimiano; 4. Berkshire County Sheriff's Office float; 5. Berkshire County Sheriff's Office marchers; 6. Pittsfield Fire Truck; 7. Pittsfield Winter Carnival Queen.

Section II — Bartlett Avenue to Pomeroy Avenue

8. Eagles Band; 9. Stearns School; 10. Stearns School marchers; 11. Miller Petroleum Systems float; 12. Highland School marchers; 13. C.B.H.L. marchers; 14. Live 105.5 & Bartlett Orchards; 15. Live 105.5 marchers.

Section III — Pomeroy Avenue to Pittsfield High Driveway

16. Pittsfield High School band; 17. Pittsfield High School Color Guard; 18. Pittsfield High School cheerleaders; 19. Egremont School float; 20. Egremont School marchers; 21. Crosby School float; 22. Crosby School marchers; 23. Petricca float; 24. BRTA bus float.

Section IV — Pittsfield School Driveway to Appleton Avenue

25. A. Conte Community School marchers; 26. Vicki's marchers; 27. Williams School float; 28. WUPE/WUHN van; 29. Westside 4-H; 30. Sacred Heart School float; 31. Sacred Heart School marchers; 32. Conant Fire Truck; 33. Pittsfield 4th of July Committee float; 34. Pittsfield Police Department cruiser.

10/24/01



Joel Librizzi / Berkshire Eagle Staff

11/14/01

Holiday gift to the city

Pittsfield employees guide into place at Park Square a 35-foot blue spruce donated by Winthrop Wyckoff of 17 Glory Drive.

Tactics pondered in war on weeds

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The war on weeds in the city's two lakes will continue this summer, but uncertainties stemming from the inexact botany of underwater plants will be intensified by doubts about how to fund the battle.

Weeds were harvested from Pontoosuc Lake last week, and consultants employed by the city will conduct an inventory of weeds in the 617-acre Onota Lake next week, said Robert S. Mellace, the city's director of community services.

However, whether a second cutting in Pittsfield's portion of Pontoosuc will be done this summer and whether the city's fiscal 2002 budget will fund "spot applications" of herbicide in Onota are open questions, Mellace said. The fiscal year ends June 30.

"The purpose of the weed survey is to help us decide whether there's any area that has a regrowth of Eurasian milfoil that should be treated," said Robert Race, president of the Lake Onota Preservation Association.

Referring to the chemical that was applied to the lake three years ago in an apparently successful effort to retard the growth of Eurasian milfoil weeds, Race said he doubts whether Sonar will be used.

"That's a whole-lake treatment; it's not

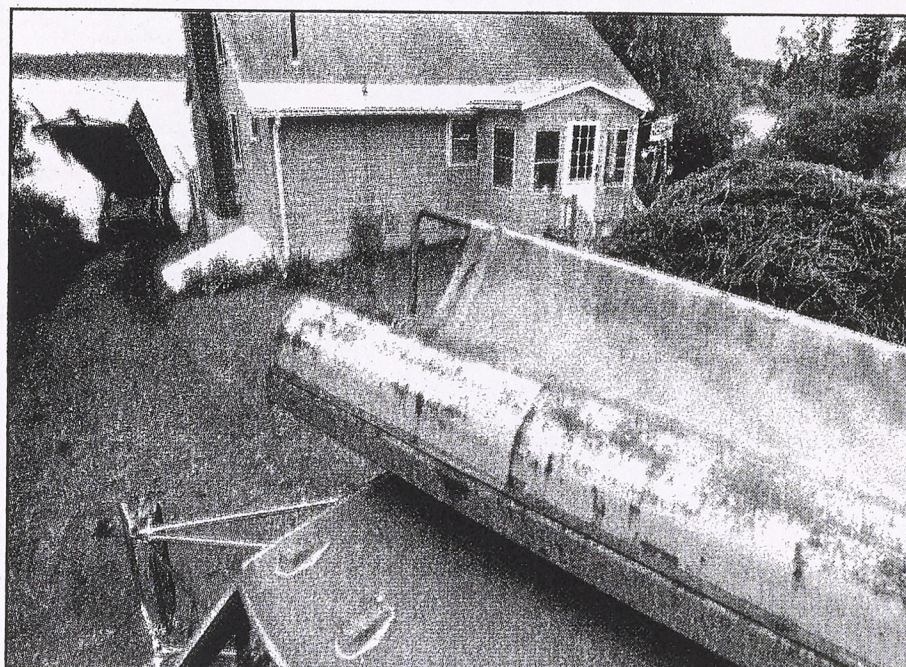
Consultants will conduct an inventory of weeds in 617-acre Onota Lake next week, said Mellace.

used for spot treatments, I don't think," said Race.

"Based on my personal observations, I haven't seen much milfoil, but it may still be coming. I'm not ready to declare victory yet. It's scary stuff. It tends to regrow, but it hasn't regrown to any kind of nuisance level yet. Weed control is very much a work in progress. It's hard to say 'we're there,' because it's still a problem. And we've got a fairly robust growth of curly leaf pond weed. It seems to be dying down, but it's an ongoing battle and it's important to stay on top of the problem. We can't lose track of it."

Mellace agreed. He likened the situation in Onota to that of a homeowner who spends thousands of dollars to have weeds eradicated from his lawn, then declines to pay much smaller amounts in succeeding years to maintain the health of the lawn.

Another purpose of the weed inventory, said Mellace, is to advance the planning



Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

A truck filled with Eurasian milfoil sits in a yard off Narragansett Avenue in Lanesboro last week. Weeds harvested from Pontoosuc Lake were transferred to the truck from the conveyor shown on the shore at left.

of a strategy to keep weeds under control.

"No one wants to be continually putting chemicals in the lake. ... It will probably end up being a combination of strategies," he said. "One thing we've

come to realize is how little is known about this. Experts don't have all the answers all the time."

Funding for continuation of the weed

WEEDS, continued on B1

Weeds from B1

control program has been requested, Mellace said.

A range of weed control methods are being investigated, Race said. They include the limited introduction of a weevil that eats Eurasian milfoil and "hypolimnetic withdrawal," which involves creation of a current that drives the "layer" of lake water in which weed nutrients are prevalent and oxygen is scarce into an aerator.

Once enriched with oxygen and cleaned of sediment, the water can be released downstream of the lake with minimal risk of damage, Race said. Deprived of their nutrient-rich layer of water, the lake's weeds — presumably — diminish.

The potential value of "suction harvesting" of weeds also is being assessed, Race said.

He noted that activities on Onota Lake next Monday will mark an observance of lake and pond appreciation week.

Race hopes that Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. will participate in the "Great American Secchi Dip-In" during the event, which is scheduled to begin at 11 a.m.

A secchi (pronounced "sekee") is a disc that is marked with alternating black and white "pie slices." Lowered from a boat, the disc descends into the water, and markings on the rope attached to it indicate the depth at which it can no longer be seen. The higher the secchi reading, the clearer the

water.

A new hiking trail also will be officially opened, as will a former lifeguard station that has been converted into a boathouse by the Berkshire Rowing and Sculling Society.

The city's first full year of weed program management on Pontoosuc Lake seems to have been successful, said Carolyn Sibner, president of the Friends of Pontoosuc.

"We very much appreciate the fact that Bob Mellace and the city were willing to take over the weed-harvesting program when county government ended," she said. "It made a lot more sense in many ways than to turn it over to [the state Department of Environmental Management], and we're happy to keep the machines close to home, although available for use on other lakes as well."

In 2000, the city purchased three weed harvesters, a hydro rake (a device designed to rid shallow water areas of weeds) and associated equipment from the county. Pittsfield leases the equipment to other communities in the county, charging by the hour or by the ton of weeds removed, depending on the scope of work, Mellace said.

For example, hourly rates for the harvesters range from \$57 to \$77, depending on the size of the harvester; the by-the-ton charge is \$80, including disposal of weeds at the Rotti farm in Pittsfield.

"Weed harvesting is not neces-

sarily the best thing — no single option is," Sibner said. "Chemical treatment is very expensive and has its drawbacks. Harvesters would certainly be more effective if we could run them all summer. It's a big program to take on, and we appreciate how helpful Bob Mellace has been to work with. We're also grateful that DEM has

stepped up to the plate and is managing the dam, even though they are not yet the actual owners of the lake."

Just over half of the 480-acre Pontoosuc Lake lies in Lanesboro, which has budgeted some \$14,000 for weed control this year, according to city records. That's enough to fund two cuttings of weeds.

Onota Lake to close for weed control

PITTSFIELD — Portions of Onota Lake will be treated Wednesday with Reward, a diquat herbicide, to control nuisance aquatic vegetation. The lake will be closed to all water uses — including boating, fishing and swimming — on Wednesday.

Normal recreational use will resume Thursday; drawing water from the lake for irrigation and watering of livestock is prohibited for a period of five days from the date of treatment, or July 31.

Signs stating the applicable water-use restrictions will be posted around the lake, including the main public-access areas.

This treatment represents the third year of an aquatic weed-control program to control the spread of Eurasian milfoil. The project is being performed for the city of Pittsfield under a license issued by the state Department of Environmental Protection and the Pittsfield Conservation Commission. Aquatic Control Technology Inc. of Sutton is the consultant and contractor to the city.



Joel Librizzi / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Late summer tradition

Picnickers gather Monday at Onota Lake to enjoy the Labor Day holiday.

9/5/01



Christopher King, left, Richard Laurey and Lewis Cuyler, officers of the Berkshire Rowing and Sculling Society, are making plans to turn the old Onota Lake beach lifeguard station in Pittsfield into a boathouse for rowing shells.

Sculling group hopes to expand enthusiasm for rowing to Onota

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — A disused former lifeguard station on the south shore of Onota Lake is slated for renovation by rowing enthusiasts who believe that wider participation in the sport will improve the quality of life in Pittsfield and increase usage of the lake.

The establishment of a community rowing program also will help rebut the allegation that there's "nothing to do" in the city, said Lewis C. Cuyler, president of the Berkshire Rowing and Sculling Society.

Earlier this month, the Park Commission and the City Council formally approved the society's use of the building, believed to

have been constructed in the 1950s, but that has not been used since the 1980s. It had been targeted for demolition.

Renovation of the structure to allow the storage of rowing shells is expected to be completed by June, said Cuyler. The society has already raised some \$30,000 and has embarked on a campaign to solicit financial support from businesses. The fund-raising goal is \$120,000, Cuyler said. The society also aims to hire rowing coaches, build a removable dock and purchase a launch.

Plans call for gutting the structure to create bays for single-occupant rowing shells and building a 16-foot addition on the northwest end to accommodate longer shells.

"Corporations have a pretty big stake in this," he said. "They are looking to attract young professional people who might say, 'There's nothing to do in Pittsfield.' Rowing is really a good fit for corporate teamwork and fitness programs, and I think it fits in with a lot of where Pittsfield is going right now. The city is beginning to find itself; we're seeing a lot of activity downtown with the rebirth of the Colonial Theatre and the stadium, which is controversial, but it's going to be built somewhere."

Scholastic scullers

Last year, the society completed its sixth season of giving lessons to scullers and renting single rowing shells from its primary base on Stockbridge Bowl. It also launched two scholastic rowing programs during the last year, one for students at Berkshire Country Day School and the other for Lenox Memorial High School students, Cuyler said.

"There was really no way to have a permanent kind of program," he said. "We really need a boathouse with larger boats, then we can reach out to schools and get rowing started in schools as club programs."

Later this month, Cuyler will begin "recruiting" in schools, including Pittsfield, Taconic and St. Joseph's high schools, Miss Hall's School, and Wahconah Regional High School in Dalton.

"As much as we'd like it, the program can't be a give-away," he said. It's got to be able to sustain itself."

He also envisions establishing rowing programs for adults and disadvantaged children.

Students from Taconic High School will help the society renovate the building, said Cuyler.



Boathouse adopted

City officials this week approved an agreement allowing the Berkshire Sculling Association to expand the Burbank Park boathouse and add a dock at Onota Lake.

Using private funds — some \$30,000 has already been raised — the non-profit organization hopes to enlarge the structure to allow storage of rowing shells.

The group will then use the facility as a base for its recreational and educational program.

Endorsing the plan on Monday were parks commissioners Bob Smith and Cliff Nilan. Community services director Bob Mellace signed the agreement as project proponent Lew Cuyler watched. The city council added its support to the plan on Tuesday.

Onota Lake refilling set for Thursday

PITTSFIELD — The city of Pittsfield's Department of Community Service/Parks and Recreation has announced that it will begin refilling Onota Lake on Thursday.

This refilling date is a requirement of the city's order of conditions, as issued by the Pittsfield Conservation Commission. The lake will be gradually refilled, but must be at the spillway elevation by April 15.

Refilling could affect the integrity of the ice and users are urged to use caution when venturing on the lake.

Any questions should be directed to the Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation at 499-9343.

City seeking Onota concession bids

PITTSFIELD — City officials are seeking bids to operate the concession stand at the park on Onota Lake.

Situated in the bath house at Burbank Park, the concession reopened last year after a three-year hiatus.

Robert S. Mellace, the city's director of community services, said the highest qualified bidder will win the right to operate the snack bar, which is equipped with a sink and an electric grill. The concessionaire provides the food, runs the business and keeps any profits; the city pays all utility costs. Bid forms are available in the City Hall office of Purchasing Director Robert Tone and are due back by 2 p.m. May 24.

Mellace said the concession has traditionally operated from the end of June until Labor Day, and sometimes on weekends from Memorial Day until public schools close for the summer.

Extensive renovations, including road, beach and parking lot reconstruction, have been undertaken at the park and attendance has increased, said Mellace. Additional details about the concession and bidding are available by contacting Tone's office at 499-9470.

Onota drawdown will begin Oct. 15

The Onota Lake drawdown will begin on Monday, October 15. According to the order of conditions from the conservation commission, the lake shall be drawn down no more than one foot below the spillway by November 1. From this date, the drawdown shall continue until the lake is approximately three feet below the spillway elevation.

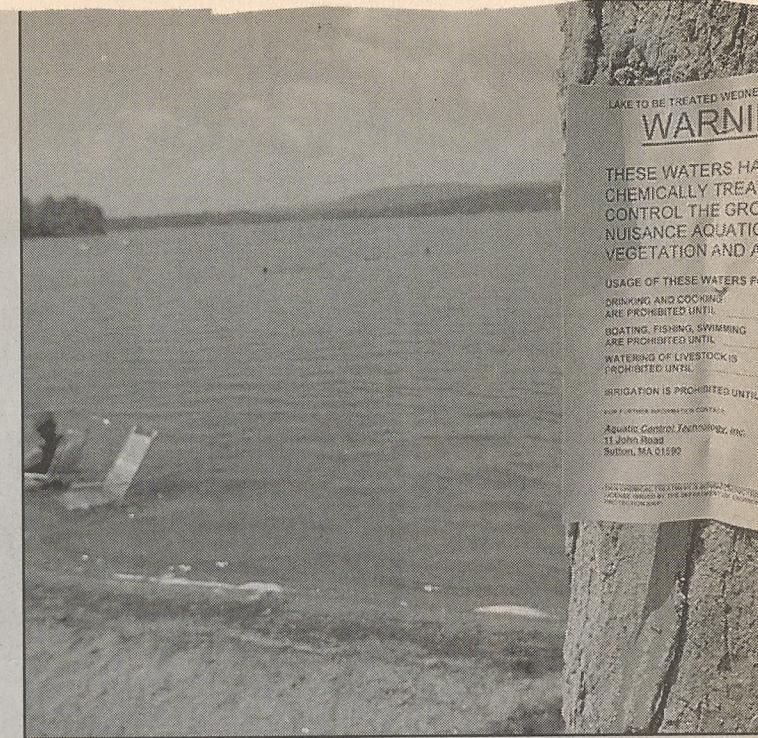
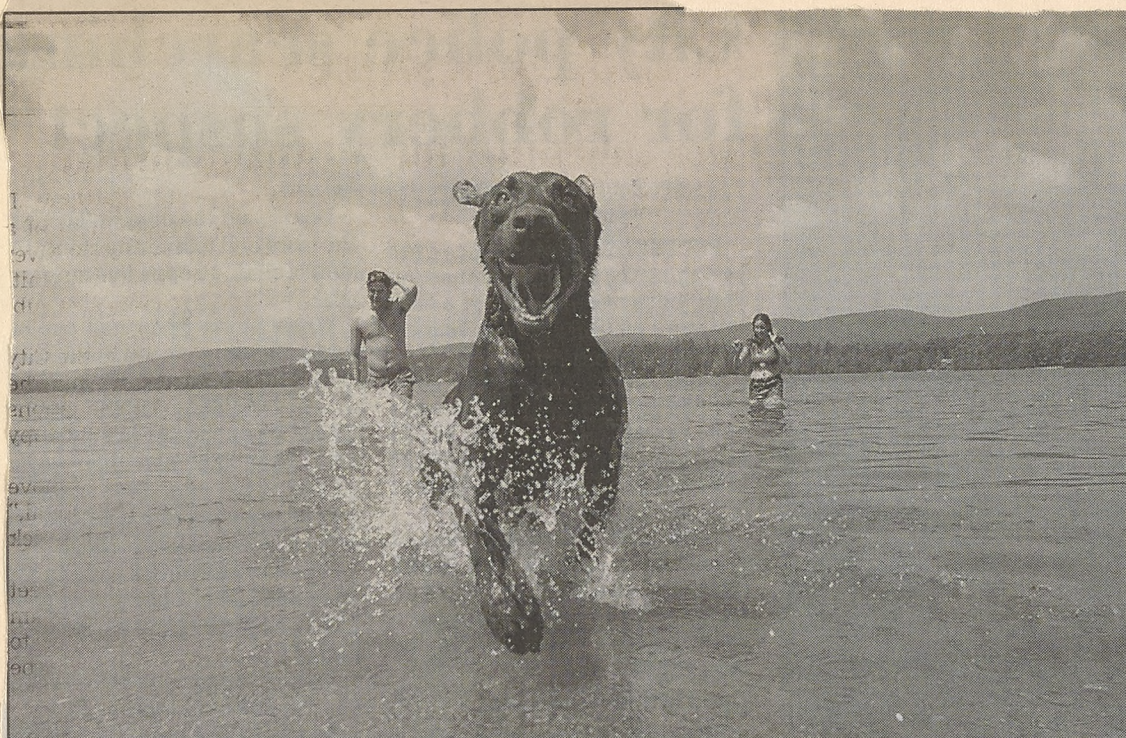
It is anticipated that this elevation will be reached by mid to late November, weather permitting. The lake will remain at this elevation throughout the winter months, with refill beginning around March 15. Questions regarding the drawdown should be directed to the parks department at 499-9343.

50 Years Ago: June 14, 1951

Named as swimming instructor for the Pittsfield Park Department was Miss Nancy Knoblock. She would conduct classes at Pontoosuc and Onota lakes.

50 years ago

Sixteen girls turned out for last night's session of the new Park Department water ballet group. The group would practice under the direction of Miss Nancy Knoblock Monday and Wednesday evenings at Pontoosuc Beach in preparation for the all-city water carnival on Aug. 24.



Photos by Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Lake effect

Onota Lake in Pittsfield was closed to swimmers Wednesday for treatment with a herbicide, called Reward, to control nuisance weeds. But not everyone heeded the warnings posted around the lake. The Burbank Park beach reopened yesterday, but water should not be used for irrigation or watering of livestock until July 31.

The Pittsfield Gazette August 2, 2001

Onota Lake weed treatments remain a source of debate

Burbank Park was quiet on a balmy Wednesday afternoon this past week. For the third consecutive year, the parks departments deposited chemicals in Onota Lake to control weed infestation.

Officials posted warning signs

throughout the park, urging people to stay out of the water for the day while the chemicals were distributed.

City councilor Joe Guzzo, an advocate for Onota Lake, said that prior chemical treatments have made a significant improvement — although

small-scale treatments are still needed to control flairs of Eurasian Milfoil, the invasive weed which threatened to choke the lake in recent years.

"I'm pretty confident that this will be the last year [the chemical treatments would be necessary]," Guzzo said.

The ward 7 city councilor also credited Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. for appropriating \$15,000 for Onota Lake preservation during a particularly difficult budget period.

Resident disagrees

But during a Wednesday council session, one resident slammed the ongoing use of chemical treatments and wondered what the long-term effects would be.

Rene Wendell of Sheffield Street



Budgetary and environmental issues frame treatment efforts at Wahconah Lake.

believes that chemicals will build up in the sediment at the lake bottom and could eventually create more problems than they solve.

"I think we're going to have layer upon layer of poison sediment,"

Wendell said. "We can't take for granted the [chemical distribution] company telling us it's safe. Do we really know what these poisons do over long, long usage?"

Wendell said he was "a little upset," when he saw the warning signs posted at the lake.

"I looked out over the lake," he said, "there were no weeds, no milfoil breaking the surface."

Wendell believes that minor infestations could be controlled with weed harvesting equipment.

Guzzo, however, disagreed, stating that harvesting only serves to distribute weed seeds over a larger area.

"I don't support, I never will support, putting harvesters back on that lake," he said.

PITTSFIELD: The Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation has announced that openings exist for seasonal positions in the Clean Rivers Program and park maintenance division.

Applications can be picked up at the department at 874 North St. or at the personnel department at City Hall between the hours of 8:30 and 4, Monday through Friday. Further information: 499-9343.

Area Sports

Pittsfield Babe Ruth tryouts Saturday

Tryouts for the Pittsfield Babe Ruth baseball program will be held on Saturday at the First Street Common in Pittsfield.

Tryouts for the age 13 players will begin at 9 a.m., while tryouts for age 14-15 players will begin at 1 p.m.

Any player not yet registered may do so at the tryouts or by calling Mike Toner at 443-0951.

4/17/01

Pittsfield Babe Ruth to hold ticket sale

The Pittsfield Babe Ruth will hold its annual season ticket sale on May 13 from 10 to noon. Players, coaches and parents can meet at Springside House, 874 North Street at 9:30 a.m. Tickets will be sold throughout the city for \$1 to aid costs for the league.

5/10/01

Pittsfield junior football registration

Registrations for the Pittsfield Junior Football League will take place on Tuesday, August 7 and Wednesday, August 8 from 6-8 p.m. at the Common Warming House on First Street.

Youngsters not older than 13 on September 1 and as young as 8 are eligible to register. All players will assessed a \$20 equipment fee at the registration.

To register, a birth certificate is required, as well as medical waiver from a family physician.

All returning players must register.

For further information, call the Parks and Recreation off ice at 499-9343.

7/27/01

Junior Football ticket sale is Saturday

The Pittsfield Junior Football League will hold its annual season door to door ticket sale Saturday.

All players are asked to meet at the Common at 10 a.m. in their team jerseys.

Drivers are needed and all parents wishing to volunteer should report to the Common warming house at 9:30 a.m.

8/15/01

► **PITTSFIELD:** The Pittsfield Junior Football League will hold its annual car wash on Saturday from 10 to 2 at 255 Fenn St. in the parking lot across from the Pittsfield Post Office. The cost is \$3 for cars and \$4 for vans and trucks.

8/22/01



Beyond this treeline is a 10.3 acre parcel of land, now owned by the General Electric Athletic Association, that has caught the eye of a private developer. The city, however, holds a purchase option on the land, which is located off Crane Avenue.

City has chance to acquire recreational property

By Anthony Fyden

Should the city snap up a 10-acre parcel of land off Crane Avenue now owned by the General Electric Athletic Association?

The GEAA wants to sell the property — which is adjacent to the eastern section of Springside Park and the municipal girls softball complex — and the city holds a “first refusal” purchase option. The price is \$162,000.

But a private developer wants to buy the land — and hopes to close on a deal May 8 if the city waives its option.

Les Poincelot Real Estate hopes to turn the site into at least ten single-family home building lots.

Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. is considering the issue while the parks commission and other boards will likely discuss the matter in coming weeks as well.

Parks commissioner James Conant has long advocated for additional sports fields for local kids. Like other officials, however, he had been unaware that the GEAA land was available.

“It’s something that certainly warrants looking into to see whether there’s a good fit there or not,” Conant said.

He added, however, that the time deadline and the city’s fiscal status may be a deal breaker. “Financially, I’m not really certain,” he said. “I would be very surprised if we could pull something together in that amount of time.”

Park commission chairman Anthony Massimiano agreed that, although the parcel presents interesting possibilities, the timing may not be right.

“I’m sure if it comes up, we’ll consider it,” Massimiano said. “Generally speaking, the city hasn’t been in the position to purchase additional park land.”

Community services director Robert Mellace said that grants may be available if the parcel is purchased for park land, but they would likely be matching grants. So, even if the grant process were accelerated, the city would still have to come up with about \$81,000. “Obviously, the concern is where the money is going to come from to buy it,” Mellace said.

Through its attorney, the GEAA notified the city this past week that the organization intends to sell the 10.3 acre parcel of land to a private developer for residential use. The letter asks the city to waive its purchase option on the property. Since 1983, the land has been subject to a “recreational tax lien” which granted the purchase option to the city.

Jay Coyle, president of the GEAA, said that the money from the sale will likely be used to make repairs to the organization’s clubhouse buildings, which are located on Crane Avenue.

Coyle said that the plan to sell the property generated debate among members and that some officials, including himself, were not in favor of selling. The majority of board members, however, voted to sell, prompting the letter to the city asking for a release from the purchase option.

The parcel is located directly across the street from the GEAA clubhouse. It is bordered on the south by the Girls Softball complex and connects with a section of Springside Park. A small housing development is located to the west of the parcel.

City park, recreation jobs being filled

PITTSFIELD — The Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation has announced that applications are available for seasonal employees for park maintenance and weed harvesting equipment maintenance and operation duties.

The positions will be gradually filled over the upcoming spring and summer months contingent on available funding.

Those interested may pick up an application at the Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation, 874 North St., or at the Personnel Department at City Hall, between the hours of 8:30 and 4, Monday through Friday.

4/20/01

Politics alleged in swingset delay

Ward 5 city councilor Rick Scapin feels that new swingsets for Clapp Park are being held hostage by “vindictive politics.”

Scapin has been attempting for several months to secure the release of some \$2,000 from leftover capital funds earmarked for the West Housatonic Street park.

On Monday, he asked parks commissioners to vote to make the purchase.

“I have the money earmarked,” Scapin said, referring to some \$5,100 leftover in a 1997 capital account.

The councilor said the park desperately needs new swings.

But he said that Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. has bogged down the replacement.

Scapin and Doyle have been on opposite sides of the civic authority debate.

“I can’t believe I’m in front of you people having to ask you not to table this,” Scapin said. “Unfortunately, there’s a lot of politics being played.”

Parks commission member Cliff Nilan said the board “has been asked by the mayor to not spend any money” until they review their budget with him.

“We’ll honor that request,” said

Nilan.

But Scapin said the money he has identified for the swingsets has no connection to the operating budget.

“That’s a stalling plan,” he said. “Do the right thing for the kids... You

know this \$2,000 has nothing to do with the total budget.”

Nilan termed the mayor’s delay suggestion “a reasonable request.”

The commission voted 4-0 to table the item.

4/26/01

Board recommends against GEAA option

The parks commission voted 2-1 Monday to “regretfully” recommend that the city not purchase a 10.3-acre tract of land from the GEAA.

The city has first refusal options on the property at the corner of Crane Avenue and Benedict Road.

CMS Homes plans to purchase the parcel for \$225,000 for development as a ten-lot housing site.

Commission member Cliff Nilan said the property is “very, very valuable.” The city has urgent needs for additional athletic fields, he said.

“Even if we can’t develop it right now, in ten years we might be able to,” said Nilan.

Commission member James Conant agreed the tract “would be a great addition to park land.” But he said the city’s finances preclude such an option.

“There’s no money to develop the land... we can’t even maintain what we have now,” he said.

Sue Colker concurred, but added “I hate to see it go.”

John Reddington, treasurer of the GEAA, told commissioners that the private development will help the city by generating new tax revenue.

“I think it’s to the benefit of the city and GEAA,” he said.

Commission member Anthony Massimiano recused himself due to a professional relationship with one of the parties. Commission chairman Robert Smith was not present.

The commission’s vote was advisory, in response to a referral from the mayor’s office.

4/26/01

Opportunity missed

“It will be a terrible mistake,” warned Cliff Nilan.

The longtime parks commission member on Monday unsuccessfully lobbied for a vote recommending that the city acquire a 10.3-acre tract of land that the GEAA is selling.

Because of tax discounts, the city has first dibs on the property before a private developer purchases it.

“It’s a very, very valuable property,” said Nilan. “We have so few opportunities to acquire land for soccer fields, or softball or whatever.”

Other city officials have decreed that due to fiscal constraints, acquiring the land isn’t a viable option.

Nilan says that this prime land — abutting existing park space — could represent a once-in-a-lifetime missed opportunity.

4/26/01
Jonathan Levine

PITTSFIELD: The Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation has announced that applications for life-guards, playground leaders, Babe Ruth umpires and park security officers are now available at the Department of Parks and Recreation Office, 874 North St., or the Personnel Office at City Hall. Information: 499-9343. 4/11/01

PITTSFIELD: The Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation has announced that openings still exist for seasonal employees for park maintenance and weed harvesting equipment maintenance and operation duties. Interested applicants can pick up an application at the Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation, 874 North St., or the Personnel Department at City Hall, between the hours of 8:30 and 4 Monday through Friday. 7/19/01

PITTSFIELD: The Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation has announced that applications for life-guards, playground leaders, Babe Ruth umpires and park security officers are now available at the Department of Parks and Recreation Office, 874 North St., or the Personnel Office at City Hall. Information: 499-9343. 4/11/01

Sad tale continues

The parks commission’s latest actions have further tainted the board’s once-strong reputation and added to Pittsfield’s festering baseball sores.

The commission held a hastily scheduled meeting on Monday to hear Larry Bossidy’s vague proposal to field a baseball team at Wahconah Park, then move to a new stadium.

While the commission did meet legal requirements for posting this session, the board added further fuel to the fire of public distrust by seeming to do so stealthfully.

Despite the intense public interest in this issue — with many residents especially interested in learning what Bossidy might offer — the meeting was not announced in advance. It was posted at City Hall on Thursday, too late for inclusion in the Gazette, which publishes the only listing of upcoming municipal meetings.

An agenda was not released until Friday and it merely included “The Bossidy Proposal,” without any indication that the high-powered executive would be making an in-person appearance.

Had the grapevine not buzzed Monday among citizens tuned into the issue, no members of the public would likely have been present.

The proponents of competing plans were not invited. The community access television station that aired earlier presentations on the topic was not in the loop. Even some commissioners weren’t aware what was taking place.

James Conant, a parks commissioner who is running for a city council seat, was scheduled to participate in a political forum — the only one before the preliminary election — that overlapped with the commission’s hastily called meeting.

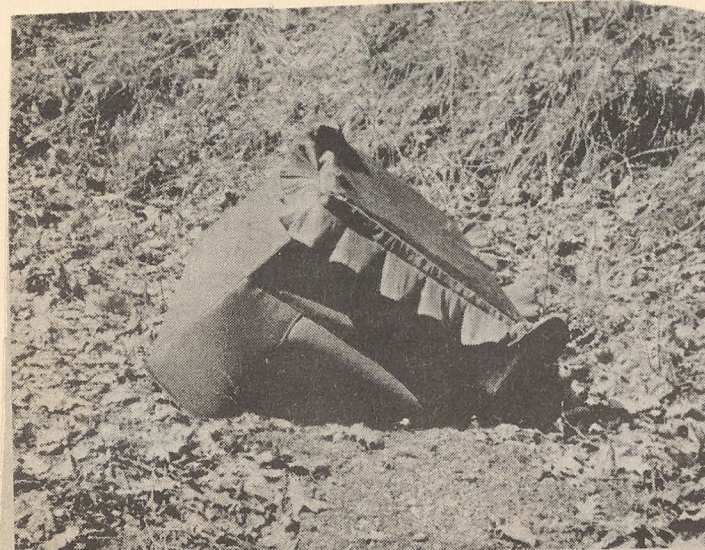
And other candidates for public office — an astounding two dozen of whom have requested a public referendum on the stadium issue — also weren’t informed.

In a related vein, it’s unclear why a public session needed to be scheduled at the last minute on the night of a major Jewish holiday.

The commission’s process has disappointed throughout recent months — from the dubiously created “questions” that are supposedly guiding the decision to haughty treatment of the public.

It’s counterproductive that Pittsfield is still up in arms over baseball and stadium plans; the parks commission’s approach toward community involvement isn’t helping.

9/20/01



This couch was dumped at Clapp Park. Some city officials believe that a recently initiated pay-as-you-throw policy at EACO is contributing to littering.

4/19/01

Doling out money

On Tuesday, city councilors voted formally to accept the one million dollar check that Larry Bossidy in September generously wrote to boost the municipal park system.

Moments later, the council unanimously supported spending about one-fifth the money for new maintenance equipment.

The expenditures certainly seem reasonable — they’ll replace components of the ragtag antique fleet currently used to maintain park property.

But it might have been beneficial if the council or parks commission had publicly discussed options for spending the money prior to this initial expenditure.

The city sat on the money for two months — during which time the parks commission didn’t meet and the city council ignored a petition calling for development of a strategy for the money — and then plunged into expenditures without public discussion.

The purchases may be beneficial, but the process suggests business as usual.

11/29/01

More ballpark politics

Is the fix on at Wahconah Park?
Indications from City Hall and Springside House — home of the parks commission — suggest peculiar dealings continue to plague Pittsfield's ballpark politics.

The latest salvo is a letter from the parks commission to parties interested in bringing baseball to Wahconah Park next year.

The letter, signed by chairman Cliff Nilan, outlines eight "minimum conditions that should be addressed" by anyone looking to bring baseball to Wahconah after the Astros leave town next month.

The conditions seem crafted to further thwart the Jim Bouton, et al. group looking to bring an independent team to the park.

Bouton & Co. want a lease for Wahconah. The Berkshire-based partnership pledges to obtain a professional team, keep it in the local area and invest private money in Wahconah.

But they don't have a team yet. They're trying to create something from scratch, something with local identity and permanence, something that will save Wahconah from the wrecking ball.

The parks commission's first suggested "minimum condition" is a proof of ownership of a team, followed by financial disclosures and letters of reference from league authorities.

Notably, Larry Bossidy was never asked to provide any of these proofs when the city granted him a succession of "exclusive" windows to get a team for the proposed Eagle Stadium.

The parks commission seems intent on following the mayor's lead and crafting a proposal tailored to either a low-profile collegiate league that has shown some interest in Wahconah or minor league baseball nomad Jonathan Fleisig, a New York City businessman who owns an inactive franchise that he appears to use to blackmail communities.

Frankly, the roots of the parks commission's "minimum conditions" are a little unclear due to the way the board operates.

The commission has skipped most of its recent meetings — to the chagrin of the time-sensitive Bouton team — and it's fuzzy how or when commissioners devised these conditions. It wasn't during any regular, open session.

Indeed the entire way the parks commission operates these days has been troubling, prompting the Gazette to make inquiries this summer to the district attorney regarding overall commission procedures.

The commission has traditionally been an informal, all-volunteer group, motivated by a desire to maximize the city's limited recreational resources.

But the informality has been tainted by questionable politics.

The commission loves to wield its limited power, but hates to meet. So it began a practice of "phone votes" between meetings.

The end result is that some proposals require in-person at-meeting scrutiny, while similar requests don't.

When one mayoral candidate — a current elected official — wanted to use a park for a political event, for example, his request didn't need to go before the board. When another mayoral candidate wanted to use the same park, he was told he would need to appear before the board.

Likewise, a pro-Eagle Stadium group (a cause the commission wholeheartedly favored) received between-meetings permission for a rally in a park, while some anti-stadium activists felt they got a cold shoulder and never formally submitted a request for a counter rally.

The commission has also informally caucused in apparent violation of the Massachusetts open meetings law.

In the past year, Gazette reporters have three times encountered a quorum of commission members behind closed doors prior to meetings.

On one occasion, commissioners said that they were chatting about non-business matters and didn't realize a quorum had arrived; on another, they were clearly briefed about a major item not on the agenda that they then voted on during the meeting; and on another they belittled the reporter for seeking entry.

Politics has also crept into the commission's votes, most notably a surprising advisory vote to recommend that the city not seek to acquire a prime park tract. The \$200,000 project price for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity was, in accordance with the City Hall view, deemed beyond the city's means.

Cumulatively, these actions have begun to taint the good work the commission has undertaken in the past.

Commissioners may have legitimate concerns about the Bouton group. But their recent history — and the way they have acted on the proposal thus far — suggests that, yes, the fix may be on.

8/9/01

Publisher's Notebook

Library from A1

reducing the department's total budget to \$524,000.

Robert S. Mellace, director of community services, including parks and recreation, said he has tried to spread out the cost reductions to avoid hitting any one piece of his budget too hard. As a result, he will not hire seasonal labor to care for the parks, will scale back some children's programs from six weeks to four weeks this summer and will not buy new playground equipment in the coming fiscal year.

"I am sure we won't be able to meet the needs of everybody out there, but we will do our best within our means," Mellace said.

Already, the city's Department of Public Works has been told it must cut \$700,000 from its budget, which will result in more than half the city's 5,300 streetlights being shut off and the end of curbside pickup of recyclable goods.

The Police and Fire departments are each facing cuts of about \$300,000, which will mean layoffs of personnel and possibly the closure of one fire station.

Mellace voiced a concern shared by a number of department heads who hope the city will dig itself out of its fiscal hole quickly.

"That would be our hope. After the city gets through this stage that they are in, hopefully things will look better in the next couple of years," Mellace said.

6/12/01

While the total of \$1.3 million that must be cut from city budgets appears to be firm, Doyle said he hopes to be able to avoid turning off some streetlights by steering money taken from the smaller departments to the Public Works' accounts.

"We are in the preliminary process of seeing where those dollars can come from ... Obviously I am concerned with streetlighting. If there are things we can shift, we will. Right now, I don't have all the numbers put together," Doyle said.

After the city raised property taxes this year by 8.5 percent, it reduced its deficit to approximately \$5.3 million, according to acting city Treasurer Richard Borda.

Two departments that will not face cuts are the Ralph J. Frio Senior Center and the Retired Senior and Volunteer Program.

Jean Beauchemin, executive director of the senior center, described her budget as a "patchwork quilt" cobbled together from city funds, state grants and donations. Any cuts, she said, would mean staff reductions.

All of the city's departments have faced tough times in recent years. Last year, they were told to cut 2.5 percent from their budgets to deal with the skyrocketing costs of the city's self-insured employee health plan. But the cuts failed to stop the losses, and the plan has lost about \$6.2 million over the past three years.

To mitigate the pain of this

year's cuts, Pittsfield has asked permission of the state Legislature to borrow up to \$10 million to cover part of its deficit. Officials say the city will likely end up borrowing about \$4 million if that request is granted. As a consequence of that step, Pittsfield's finances will also be placed under the jurisdiction of a state-controlled oversight board.

While Doyle and the city's department heads have been busy crafting budget proposals, the final plans will not be submitted to the City Council until the Legislature has voted on Pittsfield's request to borrow money. City Council President Thomas E. Hickey Jr. said yesterday that he is still hopeful Pittsfield will have its budget in place by July 1, the start of the new fiscal year.

Hickey said he is prepared to hold the council's budget hearings as soon as possible once the Legislature has voted. "We will be pretty busy, but I think we can do it," Hickey said.

Otherwise, the city will head into the new fiscal year with a temporary budget put together based on last year's numbers but including reductions to account for the deficit.

Parks budget gets approval despite few funds for Onota

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Declaring that "not one red cent" of the parks budget is earmarked for Onota Lake, City Councilor Joseph O. Guzzo cast the lone "no" vote against endorsement of the department's spending plan for fiscal 2002.

Guzzo made his comments about the Department of Community Services' budget during a hearing last night. The budget, which totals \$284,589, received preliminary approval.

Other budgets, including those for the Pittsfield Municipal Airport, Berkshire Artisans, the Berkshire Athenaeum and the Department of Community Development, also won the endorsement of the council, which was sitting as a committee of the whole.

Cuts were proposed, but none were approved last night. For instance, City Councilor William D. Barry's motion to eliminate an executive secretary's position in the Department of Community Development was defeated 9-1. City Councilor Gary S. Grunin of Ward 4 did not attend last night's meeting.

"If we're going to turn our backs on Onota Lake after all we've invested down there, then shame on us," said Guzzo, who represents Ward 7.

City department heads were instructed to trim their budgets: Robert S. Mellace, director of community services, submitted a spending plan that is about 5 percent — some \$15,000 — less than the last fiscal year's.

Responding to a question concerning the share of his department's \$58,000 maintenance budget that is allotted to Burbank Park/Onota Lake, Mellace said that the figure is about 5 percent — some \$2,900. The maintenance budget was not

7/6/01 BUDGET, continued on B4

Budget from B1

under discussion last night because it is "unclassified." Such budgets will be the subject of another hearing later this month.

Mellace noted that while maintenance is not as high a priority at Burbank Park because of recent improvements there, work such as repainting the lines in the parking lots should not be

delayed more than another year.

In addition, said Mellace, volunteer organizations such as the GE Elfun Society and the Lake Onota Preservation Association contribute to the upkeep of the park.

No money for weed-fighting

The budget contains no funding for the application of herbicide in Onota Lake this fiscal year. However, officials are awaiting the results of a recently completed inventory of weeds in the lake to determine the best strategy for combating them. That strategy, Mellace and others have said, is likely to include a combination of methods, not just herbicides.

About two years ago, at a cost of \$125,000, the herbicide Sonar was used in the lake to kill the Eurasian milfoil weeds that infested it. The treatment was generally regarded as having been successful. Mellace has said that the weed inventory may reveal areas where "spot treatment" with a herbicide other than Sonar — which intended for use throughout a lake — is necessary.

The budget earmarks \$3,500 for weed harvesting on Pontoosuc Lake. The city owns the weed harvesting equipment, having purchased it from Berkshire County government prior to its abolition on June 30, 2000.

Pittsfield currently leases the equipment to other communities, usually on a per-hour basis.

7/6/01

Pittsfield seeks Christmas tree for Park Square

PITTSFIELD — The Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation is asking anyone willing to donate an evergreen tree for use as the city's official Christmas tree at Park Square to call the office at 499-9343 no later than Monday, Nov. 5.

Criteria to be used in selecting that "special" tree will be: minimum height of approximately 30 feet; superior shape; ease of access to the tree for cutting; adequate room to safely fell the tree, and ease of transporting the tree.

In cooperation with the city's Department of Emergency Management, screening and selection of trees will take place the week of Nov. 5. Cutting and installation of the tree at Park Square is scheduled for the week of Nov. 12 or 19.

Details regarding the date and program for the lighting of the tree will be made available at a later date.

10/22/01

Athenaeum, Parks to reduce purchases

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — There will be fewer new books in the library and less new playground equipment in the city's parks if proposed budgets are accepted by the mayor and the City Council.

Both the Berkshire Athenaeum and the Parks and Recreation Department have been told to cut their budgets in order to pay down a piece of the city's deficit, part of about \$1.3 million in budget reductions the city must make next fiscal year.

The Athenaeum, Pittsfield's public library, has sent a draft budget to Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. that would cut about \$40,000 from its budget of roughly \$700,000. Ronald Latham, the library's executive director, said most of that cut will be made from the fund it uses to buy books.

"At this point, we are hoping this is a one-year crisis and we will be able to get back on track next year," Latham said.

But there are still wrinkles. The library receives about \$75,000 in state grants that could be put in jeopardy by the city's reduced funding. As it did last year, the library will apply for a waiver of the rule that would stop that grant if the city cuts its budget.

The Parks and Recreation Department has also submitted a reduced spending plan to Doyle that would trim about \$15,000.

6/12/01

LIBRARY, continued on A5

The Pittsfield Gazette October 25, 2001

Councilors seek 'reasonable' parks reply

Relations between city councilors and the parks commission continue to be strained.

Councilors voted unanimously Tuesday to send back — for a third time — a request that the commission initiate a process to place Wahconah Park on the state's historical registry.

Ward 7 councilor Joe Guzzo first sought the designation in the spring. In May, councilors unanimously voted to ask the parks commission to send "a letter of consent" to begin the process that might lead to the park becoming a historic landmark.

Guzzo said the commission ignored the council's request: "it never ended up on their agenda."

On October 9, the council repeated its request.

Guzzo asked for the second vote after he says parks commission chair-

man Cliff Nilan said during a public hearing that the request had been made.

The October 9 council petition to the commission asked for a copy of the letter of consent.

Nilan this week instead sent back a February 12 letter from a state official outlining components of the registry but nothing suggesting that the commission had acted on the request.

Guzzo termed Nilan's submission "nonresponsive and inappropriate."

Councilors voted 10-0 to send Nilan's reply back to the commission, reiterating the request that the commission send a letter of consent to participate in the program.

PITTSFIELD: The Department of Parks and Recreation is in need of playground leaders. The playgrounds will open Monday, July 2. The hours are 9 to noon and 1 to 5, Monday through Friday. Applications are available at the Department of Parks and Recreation office, 874 North St., or at City Hall from 8:30 to 4. Further information: 499-9343.

6/8/01

Firms donate tractor for park

Two city businesses are donating a lawn tractor for use at the girls, softball complex. S-K Design Group and Builders Network Inc. have presented the city with a John Deere GT 235 lawn tractor.

According to a letter from Mark Scoco and Michael Giovine, on behalf of the firms, the softball complex has been a boon to families: "A number of our employees, family members have expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to have their children participate in this program. We believe that youth programs such as this play an important role in the future success of the city."

10/18/01

South County towns scold city over delay in weed harvesting

By Derek Gentile
Berkshire Eagle Staff

LEE — The director of community services for the Pittsfield Parks and Recreation Department says he expects the city's weed-harvesting "hydrorake" to hit Laurel Lake by next week.

Robert S. Mellace apologized to Lee and Lenox town officials Wednesday for a series of delays in scheduling the hydrorake for South County. Over the past several days, officials here had been wondering what the delay was all about.

"I know it was supposed to be here this past Friday, and it wasn't," said Lee Department of Public Works Superintendent Kenneth LaBier. "My understanding was that the rake had some mechanical problems, so there is apparently a further delay."

Deidre Consolati, the chairwoman of the Lee Town Beach Committee, charged that Pittsfield had "dropped the ball" in failing to harvest the weeds in Laurel Lake, as was contracted.

Mellace agreed that "the folks down there have a point. But believe me, we want to get down there as badly as they want us."

"It really was one thing after

another," he said yesterday, explaining that the reason for the holdup was to acquire a part for the hydrorake from Japan, which took several weeks.

Then, after the part was installed, another, larger weed harvester used on Pontoosuc Lake broke down, and had to be removed from the lake.

"Unfortunately, the trailer we used to transport that harvester is the same one we use to transport the hydrorake," said Mellace. He explained that the harvester was not taken off the trailer while it was being repaired, "so we couldn't bring the rake down south."

Late last week, he said, the mechanic that services the hydrorake had to replace another part, which caused further delay.

"This hydrorake is about 15 years old, which, in human years, is between 50 and 60," said Mellace. "It's an older machine, for sure."

Town officials in Lee and Lenox, along with state Rep. Christopher J. Hodgkins, were wary of a decision last year by the soon-to-be-dissolved County Commission to turn over the weed-harvesting program and equipment to Pittsfield. The feeling,

according to Lenox Selectman William "Smitty" Pignatelli, was that Pittsfield might not pay as much attention to South County towns.

Not so, said Mellace.

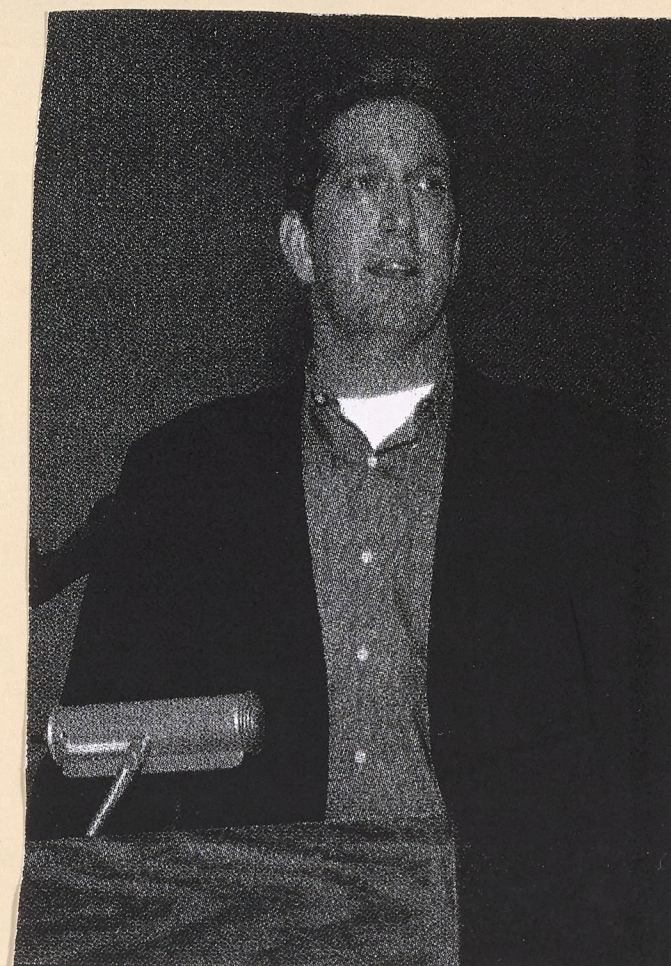
"We have a contract with these towns, and we want to fulfill it," he said. "And in fact, the guys at the garage want this thing out of here, because it takes up a bay they could use for other vehicles. I can assure you, we want the hydrorake out there as badly as people in South County do. They're truly doing the best they can."

Shorthanded

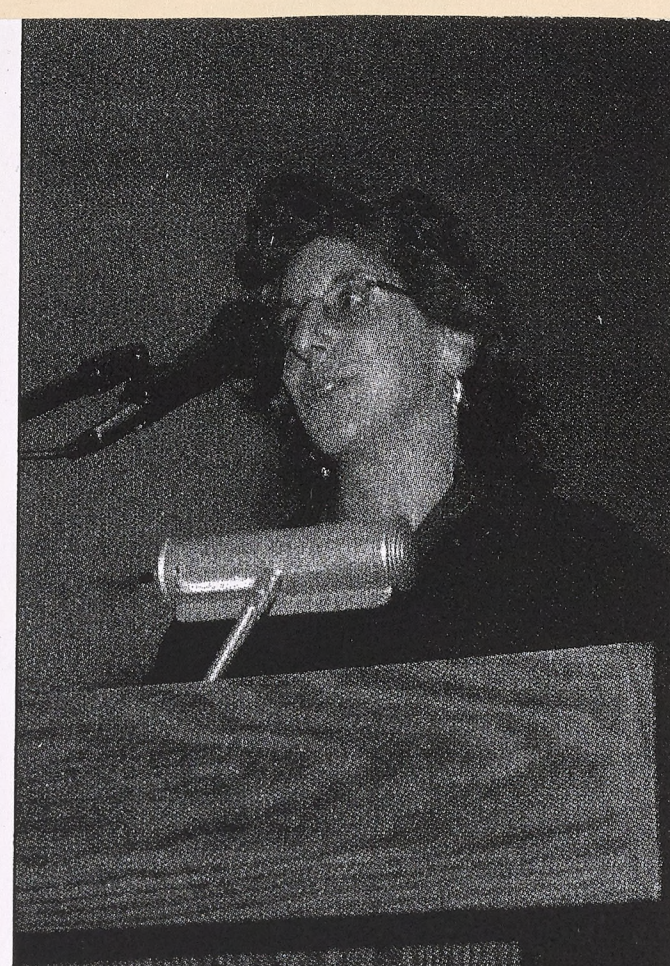
He added that "this year has been part of a learning curve for us. All the people who were working in the weed-harvesting program last year didn't come back, so we had to start from scratch. But I don't blame the folks down there for being upset. I would be, too."

He added that the city has had difficulty in hiring seasonal help for every department, including the weed-harvesting program.

"We're shorthanded everywhere," he said. "Our seasonal labor pool is the smallest we've had since I've been here."



Jonathan Fleisig was the only person to speak in favor of his plan to bring his dormant Northern League franchise to Wahconah Park, but called for an end to acrimony.



Susan Gordon, owner of Bagels Too on North Street, said the Bouton-Elitzer proposal is the only one that makes sense from a business perspective.

'Bouton-Elitzer' baseball plan heavy favorite at parks hearing

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — With one exception, all of the people who approached the microphone at a Parks Commission-sponsored public hearing about the future of Wahconah Park last night spoke in favor of what many of them called the "Bouton-Elitzer" proposal.

The exception was the proponent of the competing proposal. Jonathan Fleisig, a New York City-based commodities trader, observed that the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon earlier this month changed his perspective on one of the most hotly debated issues in recent Pittsfield history.

The list of options was shortened by one last week when Pittsfield native and Honeywell Corp. CEO Lawrence A. Bossidy announced that he would allow his option to purchase a New York-Penn League team to lapse. However, Bossidy declared that he will donate \$1 million to the city for use in improving its parks.

Calling for an end to the acrimony,

Fleisig said that if his plan won the commission's endorsement, he would do his best for Wahconah Park and the city. He also pledged to advance his competitors' proposal if it wins the panel's nod. Fleisig, who owns a Northern League franchise, proposes to reassemble the Massachusetts Mad Dogs and play them in Wahconah Park.

'Let's just get along'

"Let's just get along," said Fleisig. "Whatever way you go, I'll respect it."

The hearing, convened in the auditorium of Reid Middle School by the Parks Commission at the request of the City Council, lasted less than an hour. The commission's chairman, Clifford J. Nilan, asked citizens to keep their remarks to three minutes or less, and most of the dozen-or-so people who rose to address the meeting complied with that request. About 60 people attended the hearing.

No decision was made last night and commissioners were uncertain when their ruling would be announced. It could be as soon as Thursday or as late as next

Tuesday, Nilan said last night. The panel's scheduling difficulties appear to stem from the necessity of compliance with state law concerning advance public notice of meetings and a wish to have all the commissioners present for deliberation. Park Commission member Sue Colker apparently is unable to attend a meeting on Thursday — the soonest that a regular meeting could be scheduled before Oct. 9.

Former New York Yankee Jim Bouton and his partner, Donald "Chip" Elitzer, who propose to situate an as-yet-unpurchased independent league team at Wahconah Park and make a binding commitment to keep the team there and to spend money on improvements to the park, declined Nilan's invitation to address the gathering last night.

One after another, however, their supporters took the podium.

"The only ones with the steady hand to guide the resurrection [of Wahconah Park] is the Bouton group," declared

BASEBALL, continued on B4

Cell phone blamed for 1-car crash

PITTSFIELD — A driver who became distracted as he tried to dial his cellular telephone suffered minor injuries in a one-car accident Tuesday afternoon, police said.

Gordon E. Scales, 64, of Gilbert Street was northbound on Valentine Road in the vicinity of Vin Hebert Boulevard at 1:23 p.m. when he drove off the road and hit a sign pole, according to Pittsfield Police.

Scales had been trying to dial his cell phone at the time, police said. After his car hit the pole, bending it, the Ford continued into a ditch and over a group of small trees.

Scales had minor visible injuries for which he was taken by ambulance to Berkshire Medical Center for treatment.

Officer Karen Kalinowsky found that Scales was at fault for the accident for failing to stay within marked lanes, but issued no citations.

Baseball from B1

Peter G. Arlos.

City Councilor Richard A. Scapin of Ward 5, who also backs the South County partnership's plan, urged the commission to heed public sentiment and "not get caught up with city politics."

Scapin's colleague, Joseph O. Guzzo of Ward 7, agreed.

"You know where the citizens of this city stand," he said.

Susan Gordon, who has been the proprietor of businesses in Pittsfield for more than 20 years, also believes that the Bouton-Elitzer proposal is the best.

"From a strictly business point of view, it's the only one that makes sense," she said to loud applause from throughout the large auditorium.

"Doesn't it make sense that a team with public support will be the more successful?" said Dan Clukey of Pittsfield. "... If anybody's going to do it, it's these guys," he said of Bouton and Elitzer.

"In my opinion, this is a no-brainer," said Louis Costi. "My only question is: Why is anything else being considered?"

10/2/01

Bossidy won't buy a team

Instead he'll give Pittsfield \$1 million for parks

By Bill Carey
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — One year after he first announced plans to bring a minor league baseball team to Pittsfield, Lawrence A. Bossidy Jr. said he is abandoning the effort after being informed that state funding needed to build a new stadium cannot be assured.

The city native and Honeywell chief executive may be leaving the stage as it relates to professional baseball, but his influence will continue to be felt. Mayor Gerald S. Doyle Jr. said yesterday that Bossidy has offered Pittsfield a \$1 million

gift, which will be used for parks and recreation.

"Larry Bossidy was under no obligation to donate anything to Pittsfield," he stated in a press release. "However, he told me that he wanted to give this community \$1 million out of his own pocket to be used for capital improvements to the entire parks and recreation system."

Mayor 'stunned' by generosity

Doyle said he will confer with the City Council and parks and maintenance departments to determine the best uses for the money.

In an interview at City Hall, the mayor

said he was "stunned" by Bossidy's generosity considering the criticism that has been leveled against him by opponents of a new stadium.

While Bossidy cited the uncertainty of state funding as leading to his decision not to buy a team, Doyle held stadium opponents accountable.

"I just wish that there could have been other ways, and I think if there had been more cooperation in the overall effort to join together for a downtown stadium, the scenario could have been significantly different," he said.

Bossidy last month announced that he had secured a 30-day purchase option for

a New York-Penn League franchise, later identified as the Utica (N.Y.) Blue Sox. The plan was to field the team at aging Wahconah Park for a year or two until a new stadium was built. The city-owned park, without major renovations, has been judged inadequate by the league as a permanent residence.

Pegged at \$18.5 million, the new stadium was to be built using a funding model developed around Bossidy's initial plan to acquire a team, announced in September 2000. The model envisioned that \$8.5 million would come from state grants, \$7



Ben Garver

BOSSIDY, continued on A5

Larry Bossidy

Bossidy from A1 9/29/01

million from private and corporate contributions and \$3 million from revenue bonds issued by a new Pittsfield Civic Authority.

Roughly half of the state money was to come from the Regional Tourism Facility Fund, which is based on the projected growth in revenues from the state's hotel-motel tax.

Bossidy was unable to purchase a team before the Civic Authority was rejected in a June 5 referendum, which appeared to kill plans for a new stadium. But after securing an agreement to purchase the Blue Sox for \$3 million, he vowed to "reignite" the stadium effort.

Skepticism about funding

Yesterday, Bossidy said his quest to raise \$7 million or more in private contributions to build the stadium was going well. But in conversations he held with state Rep. Peter J. Larkin, D-Pittsfield, and mayoral candidate Sara Hathaway, both were "highly skeptical" that the \$4.5 million anticipated from the Regional Tourism Facility Fund would be approved because of declining state revenues.

With the purchase option scheduled to expire next Monday, and with the stadium funding in doubt, Bossidy said he decided not to purchase the Blue Sox.

"When you don't have 25 percent of the funding available, I can no longer give the New York-Penn League any assurance there will be a new park built," he said. "It's disappointing to come to this conclusion."

Larkin said the softening economy has restricted the potential of the tourism fund, which was created by legislation he co-authored.

While \$1.7 million has been proposed for the fund in a supplemental appropriation — money that would allow the state to raise 10 times that amount in bond financing — future revenues are expected to decline across the board, not just for hotel stays. This discourages long-term borrowing to support projects envisaged by the tourism facility fund.

"Up to now, we've had nine straight years of consecutive growth," he said. "Now it's expected to be flat or less; this was even before [the terrorist attacks] Sept. 11."

Larkin said the stability of the tourism facility fund should improve over time. But Bossidy's purchase of the Blue Sox was time sensitive and "he had to make a judgment call" over the likelihood of state funding for a new stadium.

Doyle, who is serving his final months as mayor, said the development "pretty much means the end" of major league-affiliated baseball in Pittsfield now that the Astros have left town.

"Am I discouraged? That would be an understatement," he said in the interview. "I compare this to the loss of the mall 20 years ago. The only piece of mind that I have over this issue with the [new] stadium is that I will not be known as the mayor who fought against it. And I tried to do something that was a large piece of the puzzle to revitalize our downtown, and I will continue to do that."

The withdrawal of Bossidy from

Pittsfield's hotly contested baseball sweepstakes leaves two proposals on the table: one advanced by the partnership of Jim Bouton, Donald B. "Chip" Elitzer and Eric Margenau; the other by Jonathan Fleisig. Both parties would field independent league teams at Wahconah Park.

Fleisig currently owns an inactive Northern League franchise, the Massachusetts MadDogs, while Bouton's group is shopping for a team.

Public hearing Monday

The Parks Commission, at the request of the City Council, will hold a public hearing Monday at 7 p.m. at Reid Middle School on the future of Wahconah Park. Commission Chairman Clifford J. Nilan said he expects the board will recommend one of the two remaining baseball options by Tuesday or Thursday.

Nilan said the people he's spoken to have convinced him "it's to our advantage to have baseball [at Wahconah Park]." With two proposals being advanced, "we should act on it one way or another."

Doyle, who has the final say, suggested that he favors the Fleisig proposal. "My thought is: One of the operators has a team and the other one doesn't," he remarked.

But he said he will follow the board's recommendation. "I will abide by the Parks Commission decision. Those people have worked very hard on this and [they] don't deserve the abuse that's been directed their way with no documentation or facts to back it up."

Bossidy says league will allow him to buy Utica Blue Sox

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Lawrence A. Bossidy Jr. told the Parks Commission last night he believes the New York-Penn League will allow him to purchase its Utica, N.Y., franchise and bring the team to Pittsfield.

Bossidy, who signed a 30-day purchase option to buy the Utica Blue Sox in August, also told the five-member board that if the league allows to him to buy that team he will move the club to Pittsfield, but that his proposal is contingent on the city's approval to build a new stadium.

\$3 million price

In a letter to Blue Sox' owner Robert J. Fowler dated Aug. 22, which he included in his proposal, Bossidy said he had offered to purchase the team for \$3 million, subject to receiving assurances from the city of Pittsfield prior to Oct. 1 that a new stadium will be built to house the franchise.

According to the Utica Observer Dispatch, Fowler purchased the Blue Sox for \$70,000 in 1984.

Bossidy said he would be willing to play at aging, city-owned Wahconah Park for another two years, but that a new stadium would have to be built at some point.

"If a park isn't built within two years, another decision has to be made," Bossidy said. "I'll come back to talk with you."

Pittsfield native Bossidy, chairman and chief executive officer of Honeywell Corp., was the third person or group to present a proposal to the Parks Commission to play baseball at Wah-conah Park next year.

The Parks Commission is expected to make its recommendation to the city on which proposal to accept Oct. 5. The board has already postponed that decision twice.

Although he signed the 30-day option agreement to purchase the Blue Sox in August, Bossidy said his plans would not be interrupted by the Parks Commission's recommendation date, which would be later than the 30-day window the agreement allows.

"That's fine," he said.

BOSSIDY, continued on B4

Bossidy from B1

Bossidy told the board last night he believes \$11 million of the proposed \$18.5 million price tag to build a new stadium has been secured through private funding. Bossidy said he will spend the remainder of this month determining if raising the remaining \$7 million is feasible.

Bossidy's proposal to play baseball in Wahconah Park next year was much briefer than the previous proposals presented to the Parks Commission. It is also the only proposal that contains a team affiliated with a major league baseball franchise. The Blue Sox are affiliated with the Florida Marlins.

Jonathan Fleisig of New York City has proposed bringing his defunct independent Northern League franchise, the Massachusetts Mad Dogs, to Wahconah Park. The South County partnership of "Ball Four" author Jim Bouton, Donald "Chip" Elitzer and Eric Margenau is seeking to establish either a Northern or Atlantic League team here.

Bossidy presented each commissioner with a three-page document, with only one page providing brief answers to the eight questions the board required each group to answer.

Bossidy advised the board to read his proposal, and said he

would answer any questions members had.

He said he would be willing to assume all costs and repairs to 82-year-old Wahconah Park, but only as they relate to a 76-game New York-Penn League season, which takes place from June to September. Bossidy estimated those costs to be \$100,000.

"I'll do what it takes to keep the park in the condition the league expects," Bossidy said.

When board member James Conant asked Bossidy if he would be willing to pay for major repairs at the park, including a pumping station that is on the verge of failing, he said would provide a minimum expenditure, but would expect the city to provide significant funding.

"I don't think it's a good idea to put a lot of money into Wahconah Park, from the people I've talked to," Bossidy said. "I would have to keep it acceptable to league standards."

Bossidy also said he had talked with New York-Penn League President Robert Hayes about purchasing the Blue Sox.

Can meet criteria

"Although it has to be approved by professional baseball, I've looked at the criteria," Bossidy said. "I think I'll be able to be approved."

Fleisig did not attend last night's meeting, but Bouton represented the South County group. Before the meeting began, Bouton asked Nilan if he could present a proposal that asked for the Parks Commission to dismiss Fleisig's proposal, and recommend that a decision between the two remaining groups be left to voters as a ballot choice in November.

Bouton's proposal states that Fleisig's "continued presence in the game blocks our ability to get a Northern League team and thereby improve our already superior offer for the benefit of Pittsfield."

Nilan told Bouton he couldn't speak because he wasn't on the agenda. He added that the Parks Commission would not dismiss any of the proposals because it planned to consider all three.

"That's your opinion, Jim," Nilan said, when Bouton said Fleisig's proposal was blocking his group from getting a team.

The Parks Commission had originally scheduled its next meeting for Oct. 5, and Bouton said he was unaware last night's meeting was taking place until 3 p.m. yesterday.

Nilan said last night's meeting was posted Thursday, but that the agenda wasn't available until later because Bossidy did not tell the board he was coming until Friday.

"Nothing was hidden here," Nilan said.

Tony Dobrowolski can be reached via e-mail at tdobrowolski@berkshireeagle.com.

Mellace to leave city parks post, join DEM as regional director

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Robert S. Mellace, the city's director of community service/parks and recreation, has been named Berkshire regional director of forests and parks for the state Department of Environmental Management.

Mellace, who will begin his new duties on Nov. 26, succeeds Douglas Poland, who retired in January after serving 32 years as regional director.

"I have enjoyed the 20 years that I worked for the city," Mellace said yesterday. "I think that the experience I gained prepared me for this next step in my career. I'm sure that many of the same types of challenges await me at the state level, and I look forward to bringing my experience and expertise to the DEM and combining them with the staff there to continue the fine job done by Doug Poland."

Mellace said that he has been

under consideration for the job since early this year. His appointment was announced yesterday by DEM Commissioner Peter C. Webber.

'Exemplary credentials'

"I'm delighted that Bob Mellace will be joining the management team at DEM," Webber said. "He has exemplary credentials and will provide excellent leadership and vision for our state forests and parks in the Berkshire region."

A former community development specialist, assistant planner and senior planner for the city, Mellace has been in his current post since 1996. He holds a bachelor of science degree from the Rutgers University College of Agriculture and Environmental Science, where he majored in natural resource management and wildlife biology. He also holds a master's degree in regional planning from the University of

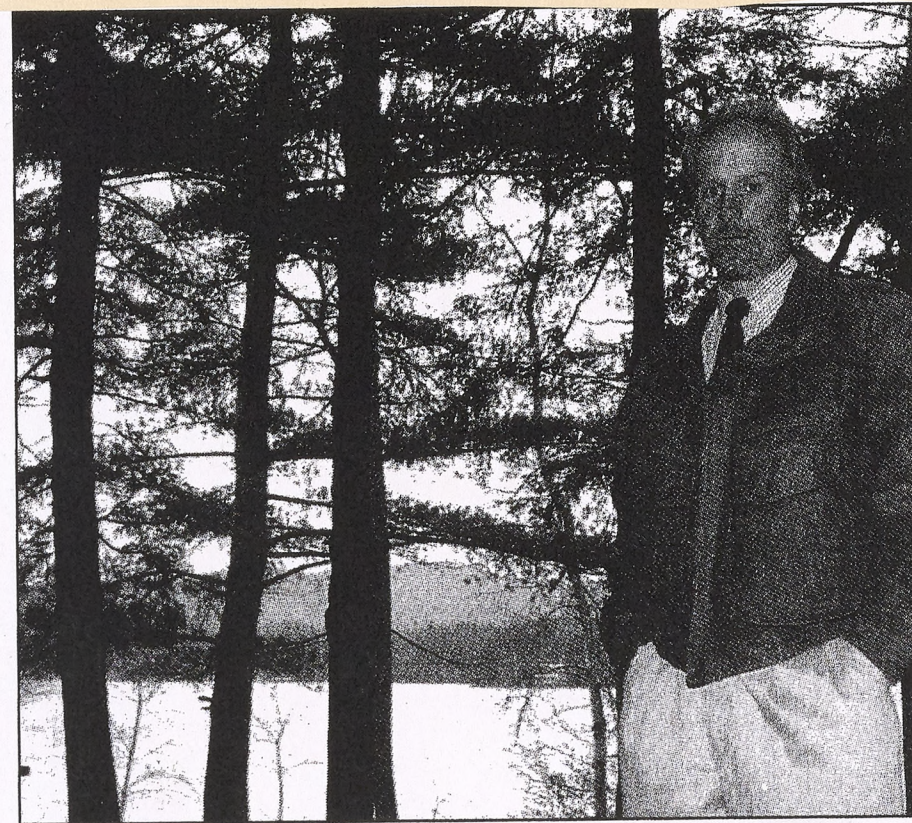
Massachusetts at Amherst.

"I'm very happy for Bob," said Clifford J. Nilan, chairman of the city's Parks Commission. "The state is very fortunate to get a person of his caliber. His departure is a great loss to the city and to the park system."

Todd A. Frederick, director of DEM's division of forests and parks, yesterday praised Mellace's work in Pittsfield, noting that his accomplishments included administration of a \$3 million park redevelopment program, procurement of more than \$1 million in state grants, successful completion of a \$1 million renovation project at Burbank Park and oversight of the largest in-lake herbicide treatment program in New England. Frederick referred to a multiyear program aimed at eradication of Eurasian milfoil weeds in Onota Lake.

"Bob brings to the Berkshire

MELLACE continued on B4



Robert S. Mellace, shown at Burbank Park on the shore of Onota Lake, will forests and parks for the state Department of Environmental Management's I

Mellace from B1

region a strong record of solid management of resources and active recreation areas," Frederick said.

The Berkshire region of DEM's division of state forests and parks comprises about 120,000 acres. It is the largest amount of land in a single management area of the 285,000-acre system. The region includes 24 popular recreation sites such as Mount Greylock State Reservation, Natural Bridge State Park, October Mountain State Forest, Bash Bish Falls State Park and the 88.7 miles of the Appalachian Trail that pass through Massachusetts.

Webber said that he is grateful to George S. Wislocki of the Berkshire Natural Resource Council, who is a member of the DEM interview team, for his support of Mellace. In addition, said Webber, Paul Adams is to be commended for his "skillful and steady leadership while serving as interim director of the region since Doug Poland's retirement." Adams will return to his position as assistant director when Mellace begins his duties, Webber said.

Mellace lives in Pittsfield with his wife, the former Patricia Ray, and their children, Matthew, 14, and Lisa, 12.

D.R. Bahlman can be reached at dbahlman@berkshireeagle.com.

11/8/01

